

HEARTTHROB

CHRISTOPHER SEBELA • ROBERT WILSON IV • NICK FILARDI

“Crime, romance and
open heart surgery.
Highly (cardiac) arresting.”

—Kieron Gillen,
The Wicked + The Divine



1



HEARTTHROB

BOOK 1 NEVER GOING BACK AGAIN

NEAT



TNRB

BOOK 1 NEVER GOING BACK AGAIN

WRITTEN BY
CHRISTOPHER SEBELA

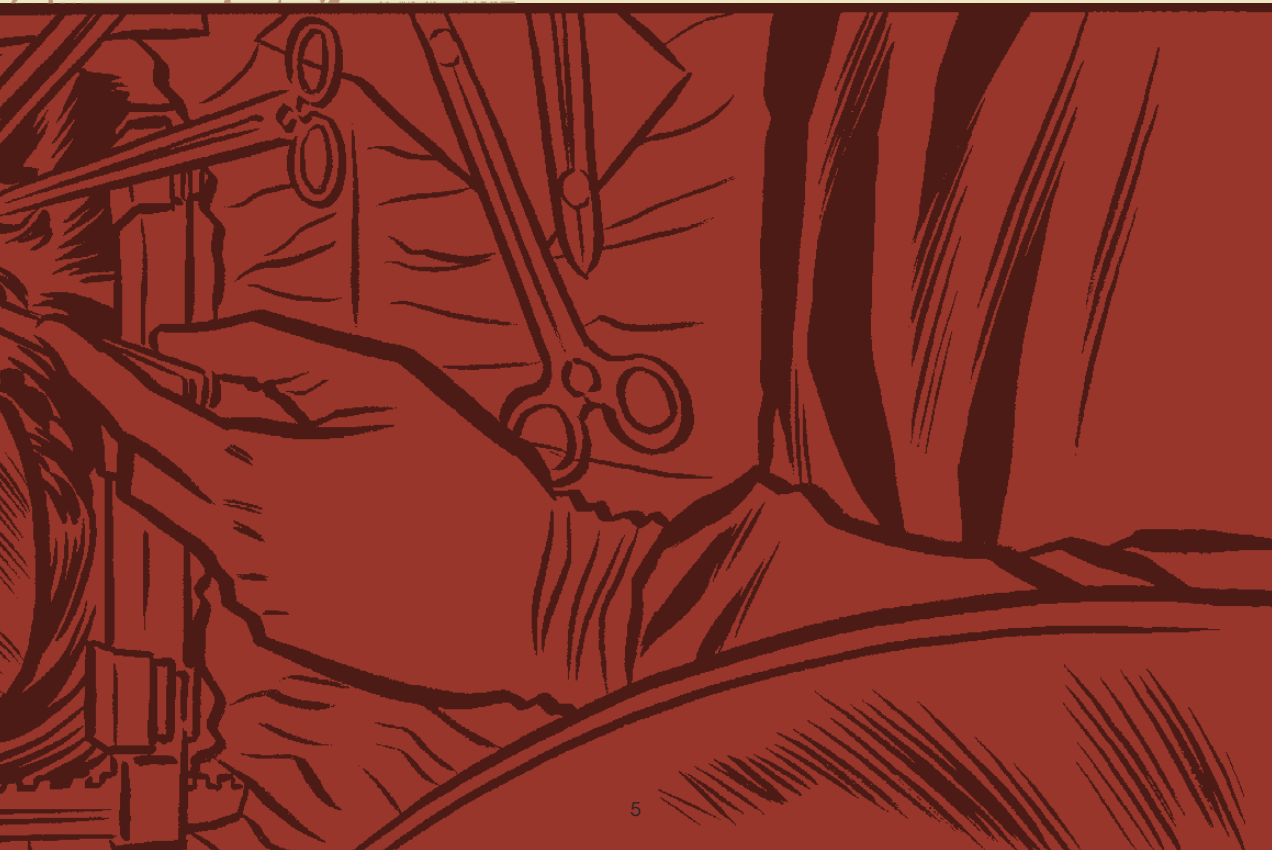
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HEARTTHROB

BY CHRISTOPHER SEBELA, ROBERT WILSON IV,
NICK FILARDI

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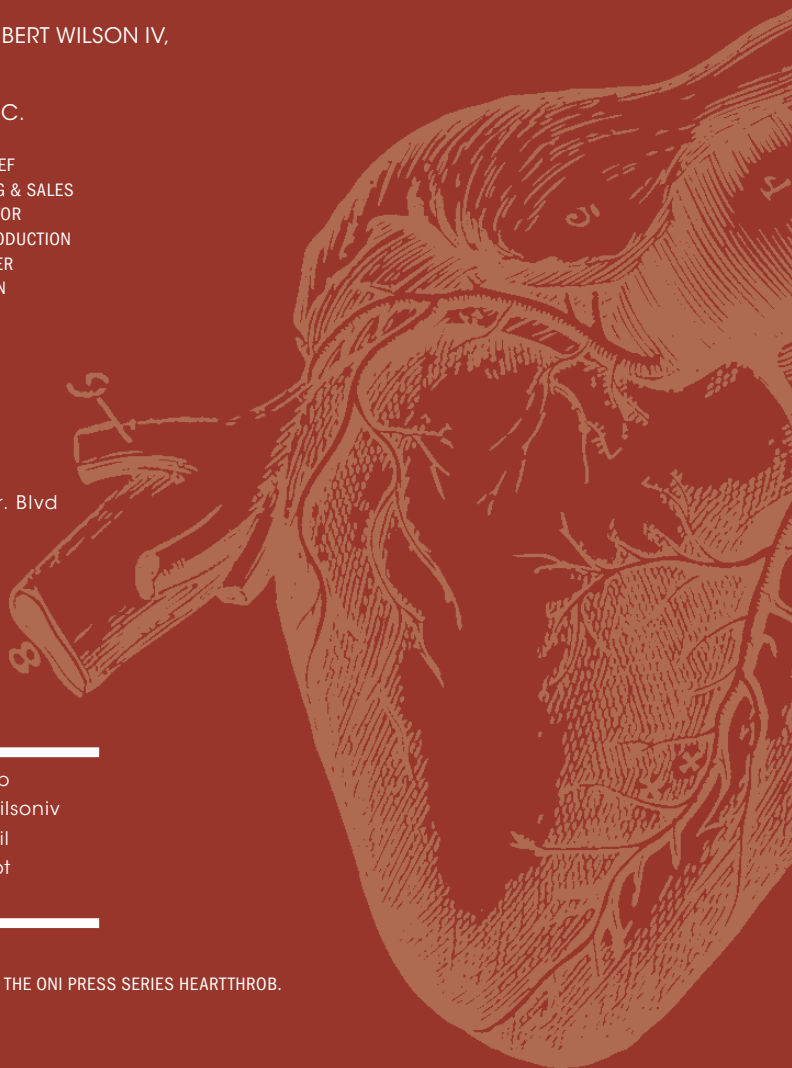
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CHAPTER 1





FEBRUARY 4, 1977

SO I'M DEAD.

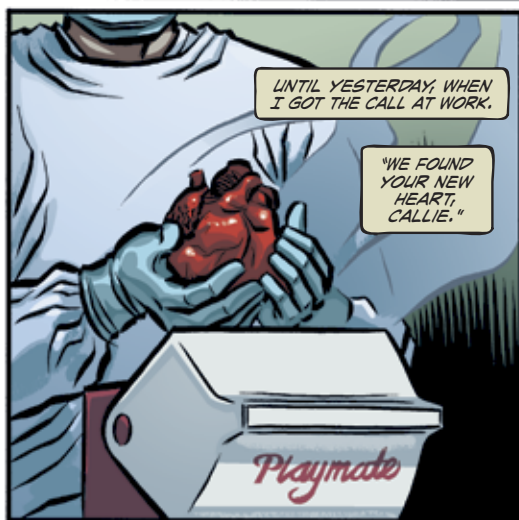
AND THAT'S A BUMMER.

BUT I'VE BEEN DYING ALL MY LIFE.



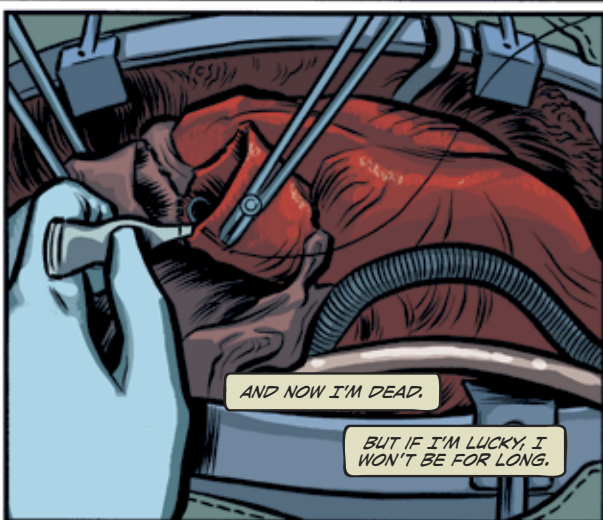
UNTIL YESTERDAY, WHEN
I GOT THE CALL AT WORK.

"WE FOUND
YOUR NEW
HEART,
CALLIE."

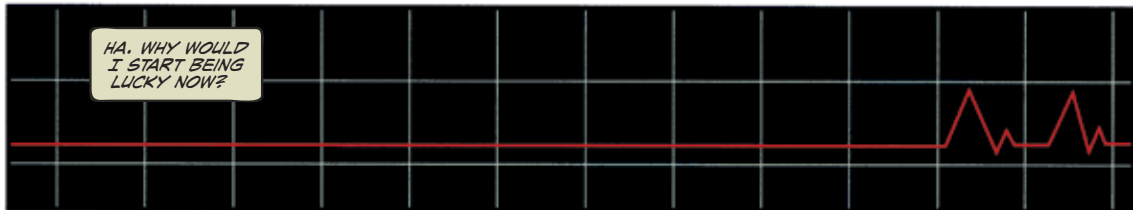


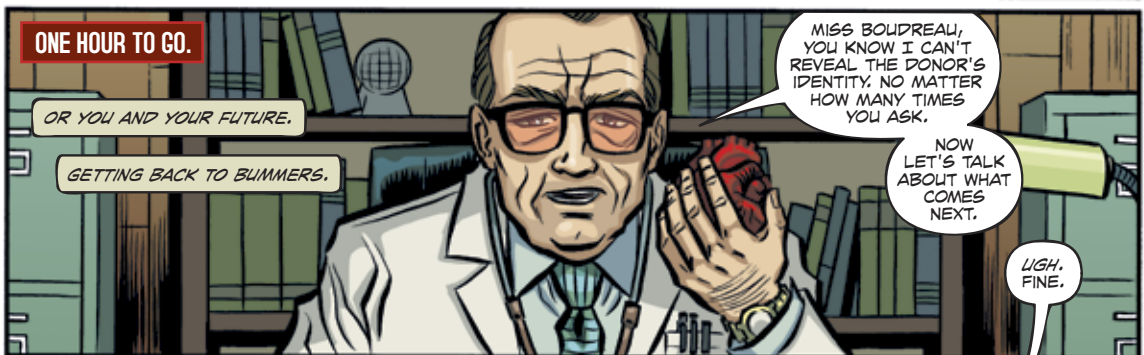
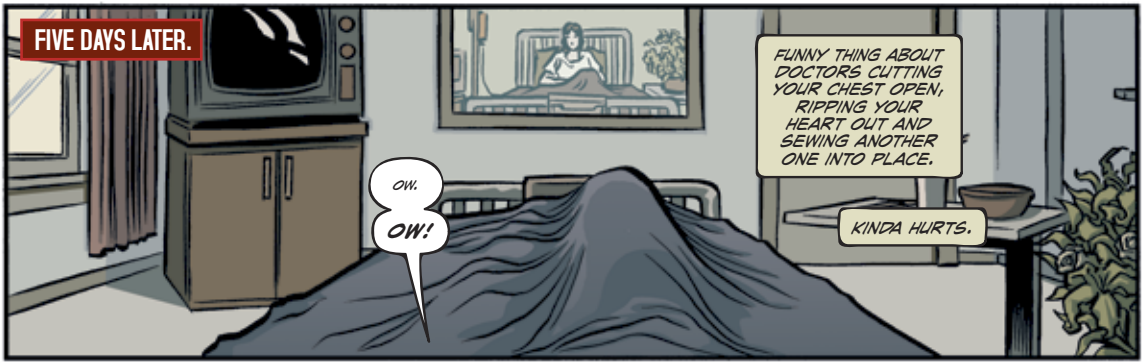
AND NOW I'M DEAD.

BUT IF I'M LUCKY, I
WON'T BE FOR LONG.



HA. WHY WOULD
I START BEING
LUCKY NOW?



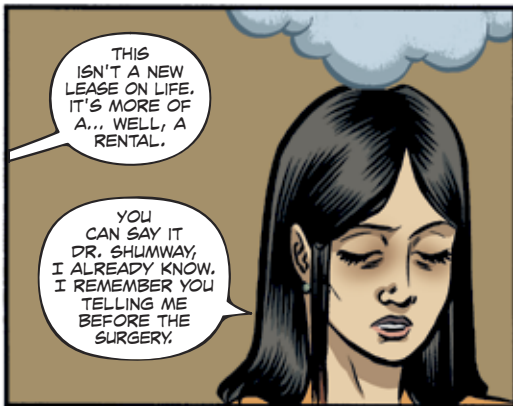




YOUR HEART IS ALMOST PERFECTLY IN SYNC WITH YOUR BODY. IT'S FAR BETTER THAN MOST TRANSPLANTS EXPERIENCE.

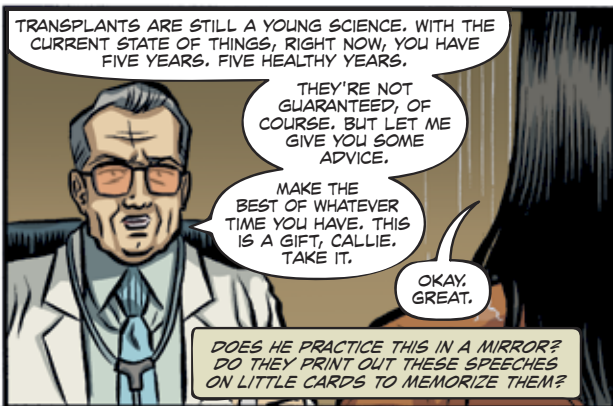
YOU SHOULD BE VERY PLEASED.

BUT...



THIS ISN'T A NEW LEASE ON LIFE. IT'S MORE OF A... WELL, A RENTAL.

YOU CAN SAY IT DR. SHUMWAY, I ALREADY KNOW. I REMEMBER YOU TELLING ME BEFORE THE SURGERY.



TRANSPLANTS ARE STILL A YOUNG SCIENCE. WITH THE CURRENT STATE OF THINGS, RIGHT NOW, YOU HAVE FIVE YEARS. FIVE HEALTHY YEARS.

THEY'RE NOT GUARANTEED, OF COURSE. BUT LET ME GIVE YOU SOME ADVICE.

MAKE THE BEST OF WHATEVER TIME YOU HAVE. THIS IS A GIFT, CALLIE. TAKE IT.

OKAY. GREAT.

DOES HE PRACTICE THIS IN A MIRROR? DO THEY PRINT OUT THESE SPEECHES ON LITTLE CARDS TO MEMORIZE THEM?



I'M THE ONE WHO'S BEEN SICK ALL HER LIFE. I'M THE ONE WHO'S DIED EXACTLY TWICE IN THE LAST TWENTY EIGHT YEARS.

I'M THE ONE WALKING AROUND WITH SOME STRANGER'S HEART IN MY CHEST. BECAUSE YOU WON'T TELL ME WHO HE IS, YOU... YOU...

FUCKER.

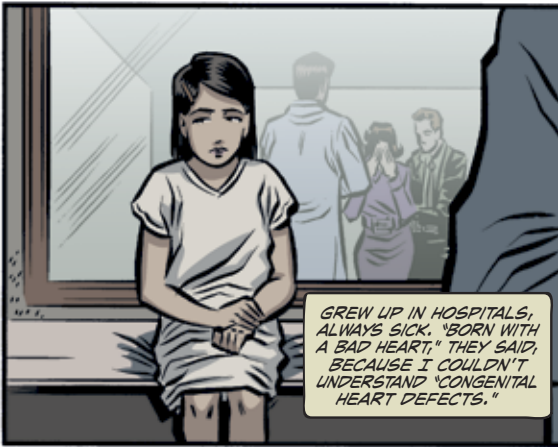


I GET THAT IT'S A GIFT, JACKASS.

YOU NEED A RIDE, LADY?



WHAT I NEED IS SOMEONE TO TELL ME WHAT THE FUCK I DO WITH IT.



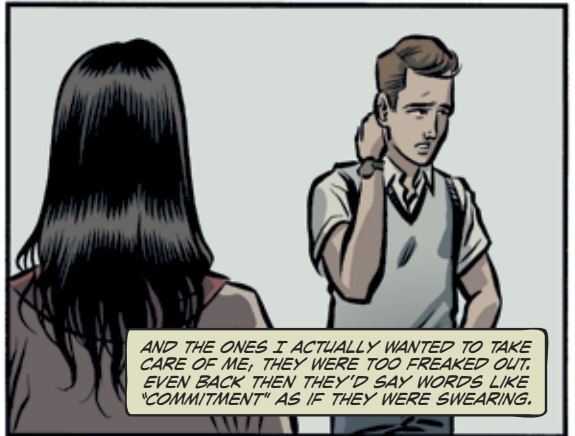
GREW UP IN HOSPITALS, ALWAYS SICK. "BORN WITH A BAD HEART," THEY SAID, BECAUSE I COULDN'T UNDERSTAND "CONGENITAL HEART DEFECTS."



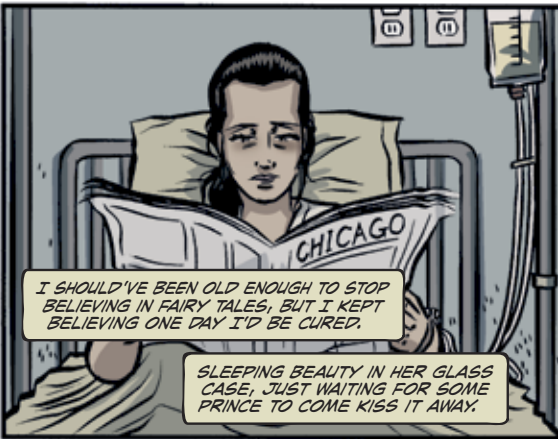
"YOU HAVE TO BE MORE CAREFUL THAN THE OTHER KIDS," THEY SAID BETWEEN SURGERIES AND PROCEDURES.



EVERYONE TREATING ME LIKE SOME DELICATE FLOWER.



AND THE ONES I ACTUALLY WANTED TO TAKE CARE OF ME, THEY WERE TOO FREAKED OUT. EVEN BACK THEN THEY'D SAY WORDS LIKE "COMMITMENT" AS IF THEY WERE SWEARING.

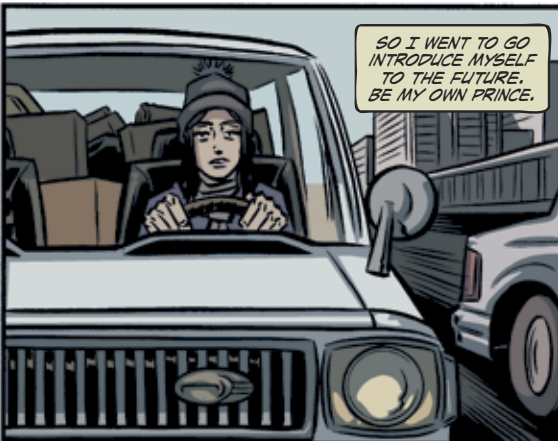


I SHOULD'VE BEEN OLD ENOUGH TO STOP BELIEVING IN FAIRY TALES, BUT I KEPT BELIEVING ONE DAY I'D BE CURED.

SLEEPING BEAUTY IN HER GLASS CASE, JUST WAITING FOR SOME PRINCE TO COME KISS IT AWAY.



UNTIL ONE DAY, THE REAL WORLD CAUGHT UP WITH MY FANTASIES. SCIENCE FICTION WAS REGULAR SCIENCE NOW.



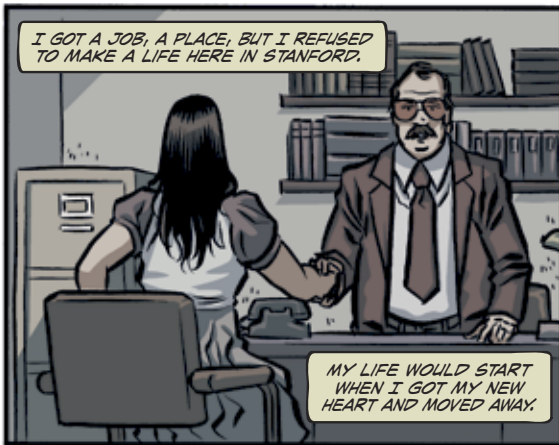
SO I WENT TO GO INTRODUCE MYSELF TO THE FUTURE. BE MY OWN PRINCE.



"LONG WAITING LIST," THEY SAID.

"PROHIBITIVELY EXPENSIVE," THEY SAID.

"SCREW IT," I SAID.



I GOT A JOB, A PLACE, BUT I REFUSED TO MAKE A LIFE HERE IN STANFORD.

MY LIFE WOULD START WHEN I GOT MY NEW HEART AND MOVED AWAY.



THEN SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENED.

I STARTED TO ADJUST.



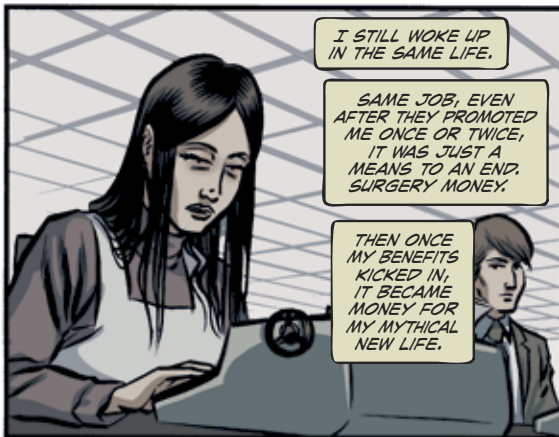
FIVE YEARS IS A LONG TIME TO WAIT.

I STARTED TO WONDER IF I'D JUST LULLED MYSELF INTO A NEW FANTASY.



SO I REBELLED. ABOUT TEN YEARS TOO LATE.

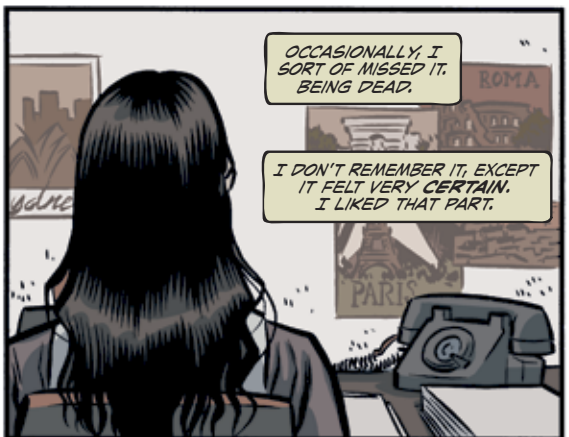
EVERYTHING MY DOCTORS SAID NOT TO DO, I DID IT.



I STILL WOKE UP IN THE SAME LIFE.

SAME JOB, EVEN AFTER THEY PROMOTED ME ONCE OR TWICE, IT WAS JUST A MEANS TO AN END. SURGERY MONEY.

THEN ONCE MY BENEFITS KICKED IN, IT BECAME MONEY FOR MY MYTHICAL NEW LIFE.



OCCASIONALLY, I SORT OF MISSED IT. BEING DEAD.

I DON'T REMEMBER IT, EXCEPT IT FELT VERY CERTAIN. I LIKED THAT PART.



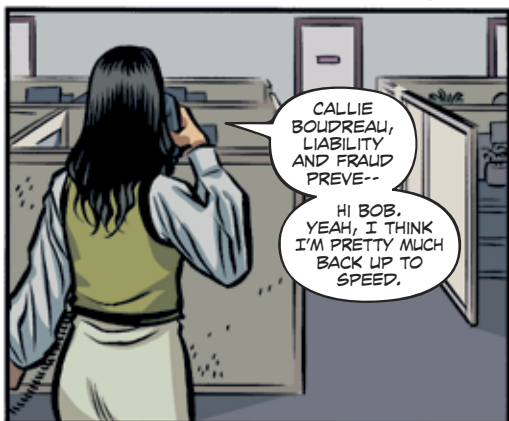
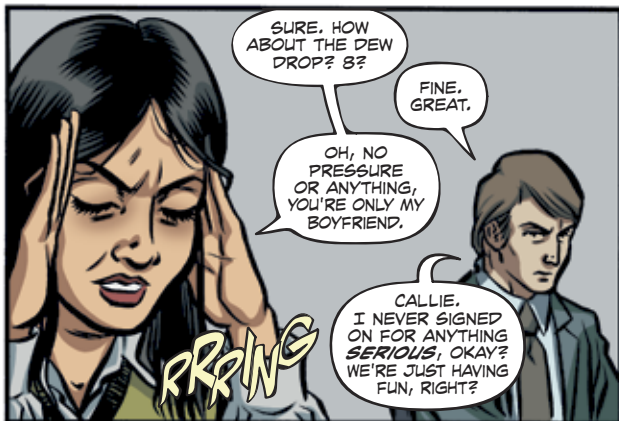
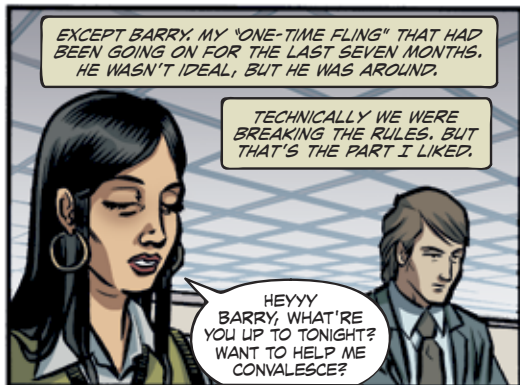
THEN THEY FINALLY CALLED. A DONOR HAD BEEN FOUND.

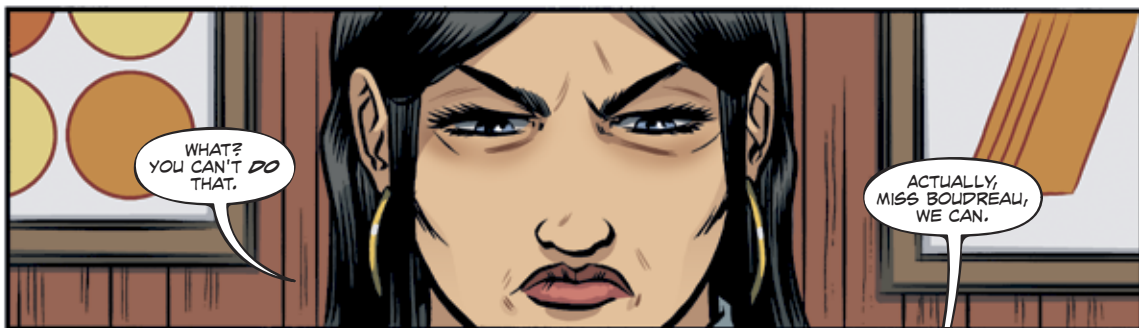
HOPE WIGGLED ITS WAY BACK IN.



LIFE MADE SENSE AGAIN, MAYBE BECAUSE IT WAS SO CLOSE TO DISAPPEARING FOREVER.

OR FINALLY STARTING.





WHAT?
YOU CAN'T *DO*
THAT.

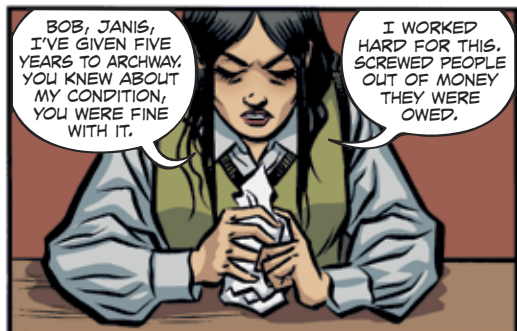
ACTUALLY,
MISS BOUDREAU,
WE CAN.



WHEN YOU WERE PROMOTED
LAST YEAR, YOU SIGNED NEW
CONTRACTS. YOU ALSO SIGNED
A CLAUSE FREEING US FROM
ANY FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS
TOWARDS PREEXISTING
CONDITIONS.

NOW
CALLIE--

FUNNY HOW
NO ONE EVER TOLD
ME THAT. IS THAT THE WHOLE
REASON I GOT THE STUPID
PROMOTION? TO FOOL ME
INTO SIGNING AWAY
MY LIFE?



BOB, JANIS,
I'VE GIVEN FIVE
YEARS TO ARCHWAY.
YOU KNEW ABOUT
MY CONDITION,
YOU WERE FINE
WITH IT.

I WORKED
HARD FOR THIS.
SCREWED PEOPLE
OUT OF MONEY
THEY WERE
OWED.



I'M NOT
GOING TO LET
YOU SCREW ME,
TOO.

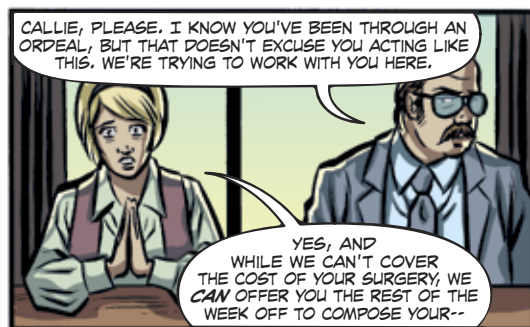
WE'RE
SORRY YOU
FEEL THIS WAY
BUT--



LOOK
AT IT.

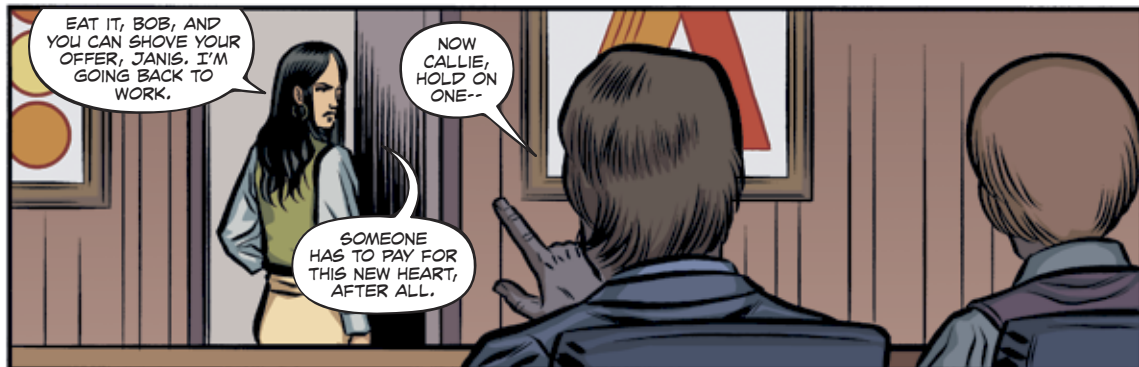
I'M NOT AN
EXPENDITURE OR SOME
HIGH-RISK CASE. I'M
THE WOMAN WHO HAS
WORKED WITH YOU,
FOR YOU.

IF I
DIDN'T GET THIS,
I WOULD BE
DEAD.



CALLIE, PLEASE. I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH AN
ORDEAL, BUT THAT DOESN'T EXCUSE YOU ACTING LIKE
THIS. WE'RE TRYING TO WORK WITH YOU HERE.

YES, AND
WHILE WE CAN'T COVER
THE COST OF YOUR SURGERY, WE
CAN OFFER YOU THE REST OF THE
WEEK OFF TO COMPOSE YOUR--



EAT IT, BOB, AND
YOU CAN SHOVE YOUR
OFFER, JANIS. I'M
GOING BACK TO
WORK.

NOW
CALLIE,
HOLD ON
ONE--

SOMEONE
HAS TO PAY FOR
THIS NEW HEART,
AFTER ALL.



WHAT THE HELL'S
GOING ON WITH ME?

I STINK AT
CONFRONTATION.
I'D NORMALLY
RATHER RUN
AND HIDE THAN
EVEN SUGGEST
TO SOMEONE
THEY MIGHT
BE WRONG.

NEVER HIT SOMEONE
WITH A CONTRACT OR
YELLED AT MY BOSS,
THAT'S FOR SURE.

NEVER PUT AWAY
SEVEN OF THESE
WITHOUT HARDLY
FEELING IT.

BARELY OFF THE WAGON AND MY
TOLERANCE IS STRONGER THAN EVER.
NORMALLY I'D BE ON THE FLOOR.

MINE, ON A GOOD NIGHT. BARRY'S
ON A WORSE ONE. SOMETIMES
JERRY, THE BARTENDER, LET ME
SLEEP IT OFF ON THE POOL TABLE.



OUTSIDE OF WORK, THESE ARE
THE ONLY PEOPLE I TALK TO.

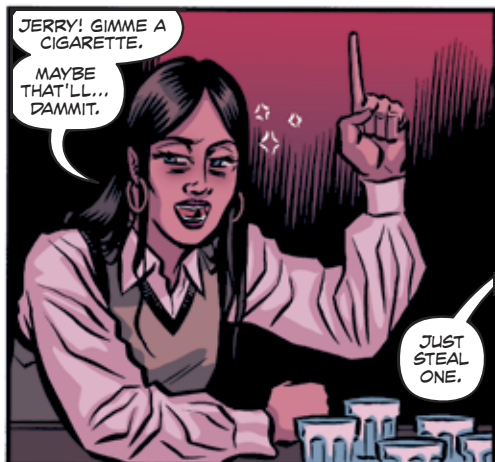
MEH.

I SPENT SO MUCH OF MY LIFE INDOORS,
SIDELINED BY SICKNESS, I KIND OF
STINK AT MAKING FRIENDS BY NOW.

THEY'RE NOT MY FRIENDS.
I DON'T REALLY HAVE ANY
OF THOSE. NOT HERE.

THIS ISN'T MY LIFE;
THIS ISN'T MY TOWN.

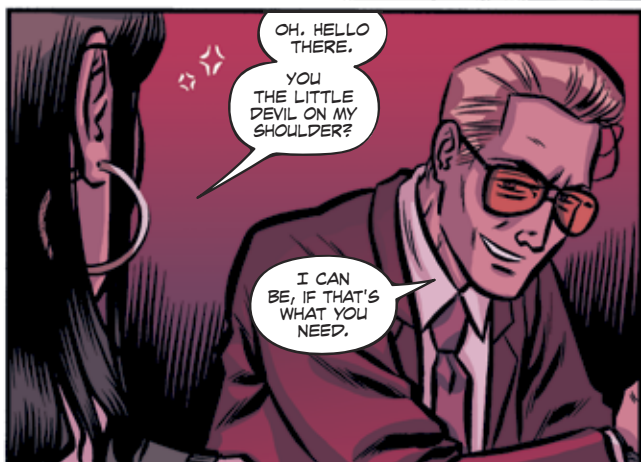
THIS IS WHERE I KILL
TIME UNTIL I FIGURE
OUT WHAT THEY ARE.



JERRY! GIMME A
CIGARETTE.

MAYBE
THAT'LL...
DAMMIT.

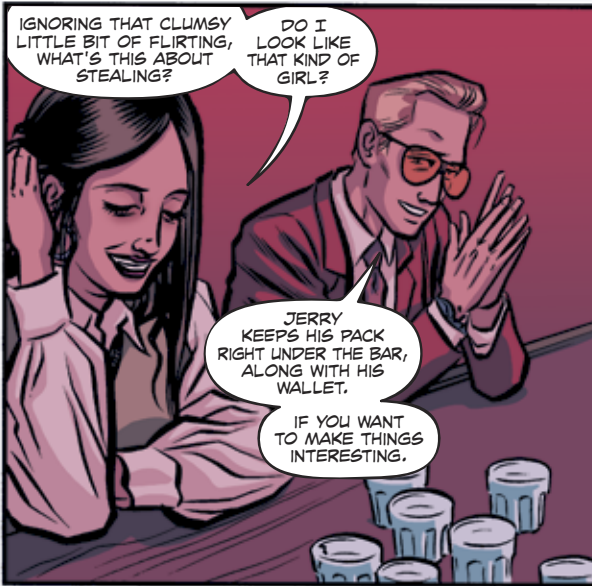
JUST
STEAL
ONE.

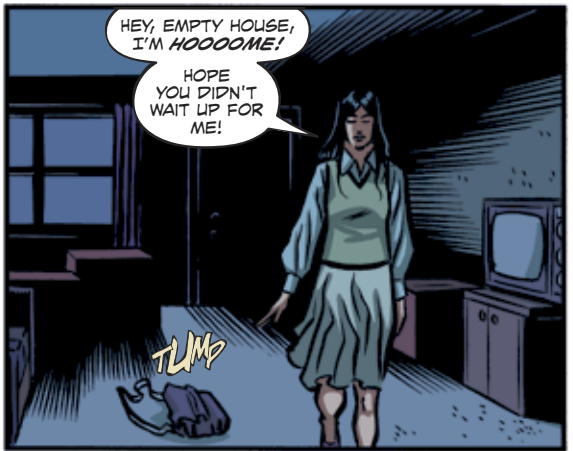
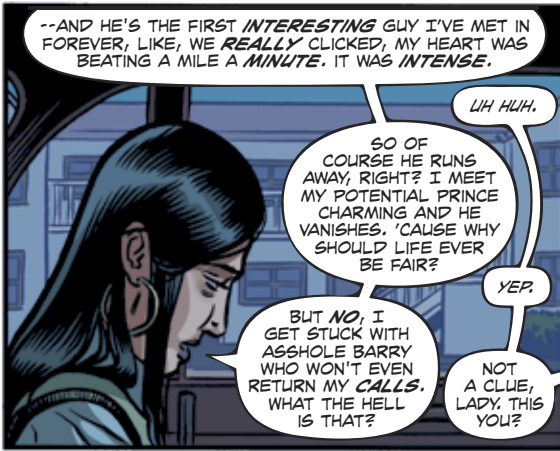


OH, HELLO
THERE.

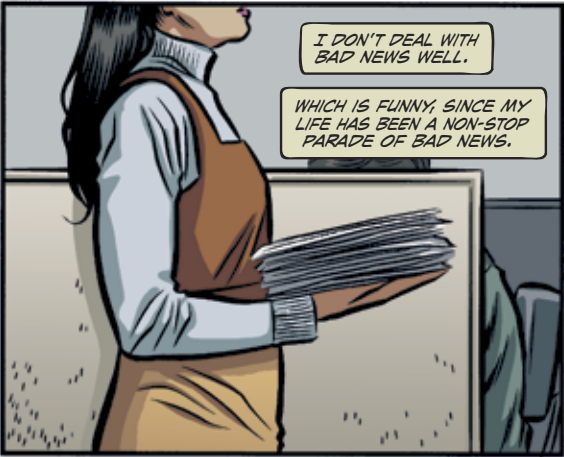
YOU
THE LITTLE
DEVIL ON MY
SHOULDER?

I CAN
BE, IF THAT'S
WHAT YOU
NEED.



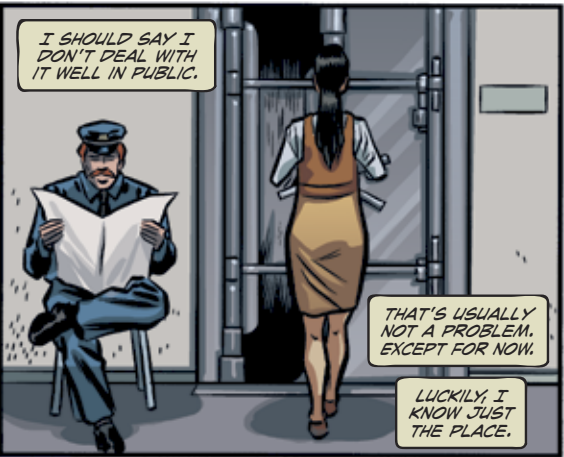






I DON'T DEAL WITH
BAD NEWS WELL.

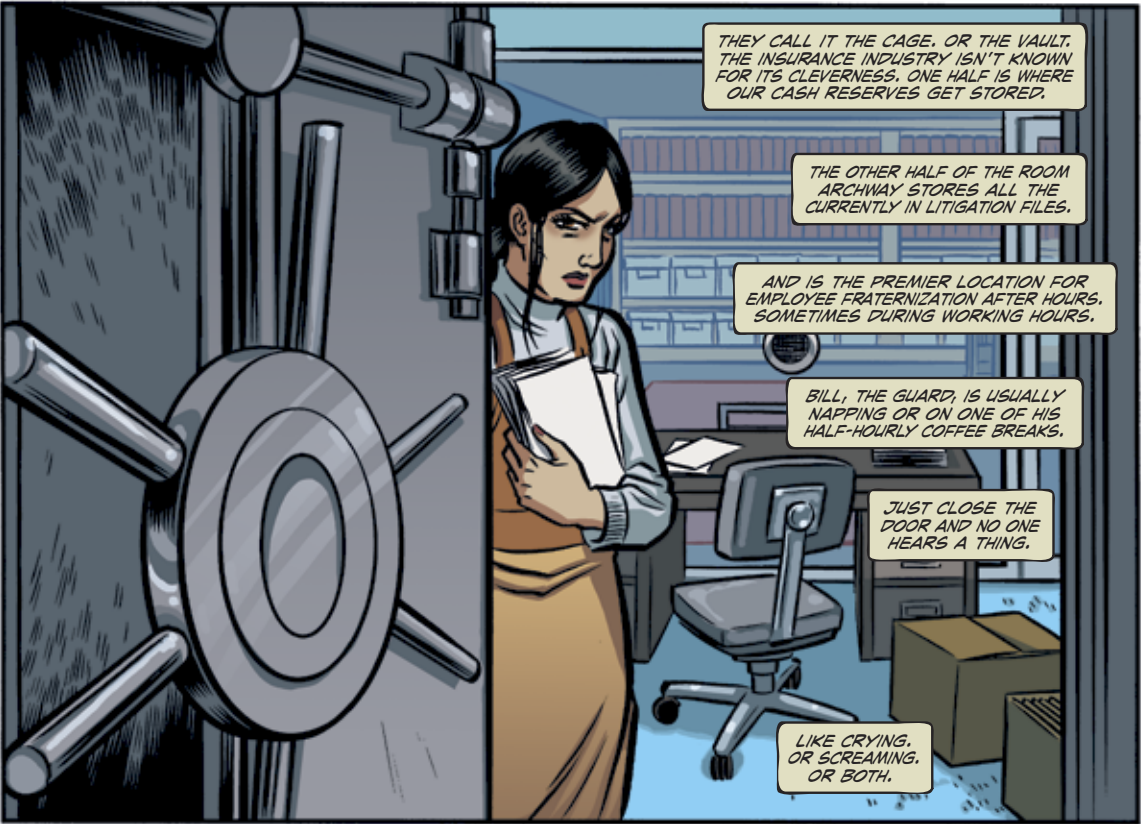
WHICH IS FUNNY, SINCE MY
LIFE HAS BEEN A NON-STOP
PARADE OF BAD NEWS.



I SHOULD SAY I
DON'T DEAL WITH
IT WELL IN PUBLIC.

THAT'S USUALLY
NOT A PROBLEM.
EXCEPT FOR NOW.

LUCKILY, I
KNOW JUST
THE PLACE.



THEY CALL IT THE CAGE, OR THE VAULT.
THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY ISN'T KNOWN
FOR ITS CLEVERNESS. ONE HALF IS WHERE
OUR CASH RESERVES GET STORED.

THE OTHER HALF OF THE ROOM
ARCHWAY STORES ALL THE
CURRENTLY IN LITIGATION FILES.

AND IS THE PREMIER LOCATION FOR
EMPLOYEE FRATERNIZATION AFTER HOURS.
SOMETIMES DURING WORKING HOURS.

BILL, THE GUARD, IS USUALLY
NAPPING OR ON ONE OF HIS
HALF-HOURLY COFFEE BREAKS.

JUST CLOSE THE
DOOR AND NO ONE
HEARS A THING.

LIKE CRYING.
OR SCREAMING.
OR BOTH.



AAA
HHHHHHH
HHHHHHH
HHH!

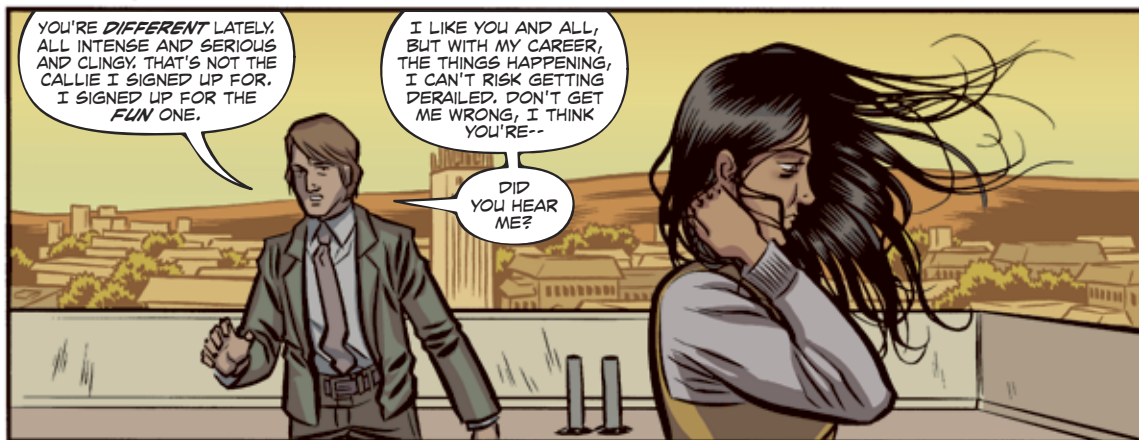
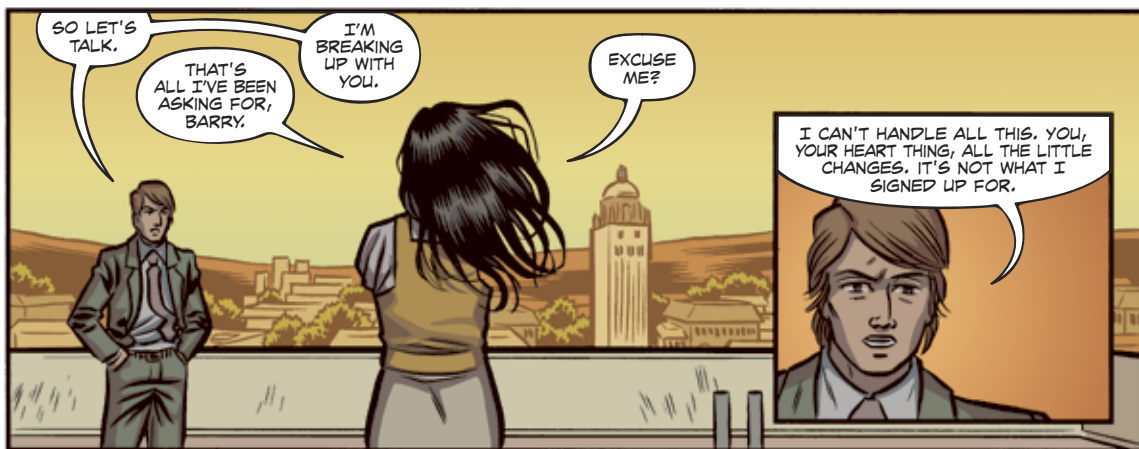


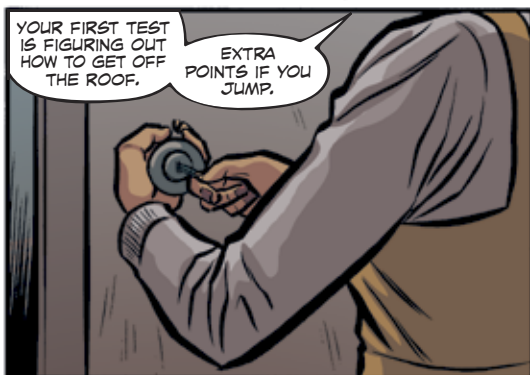
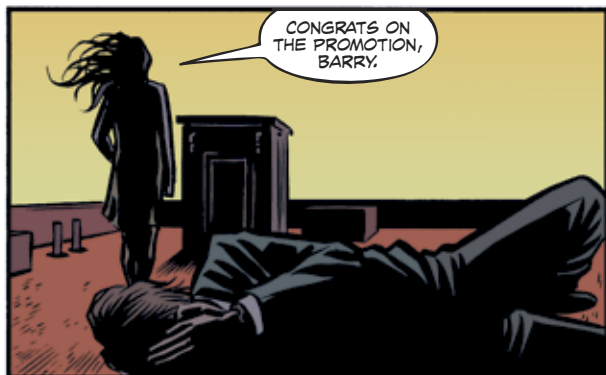
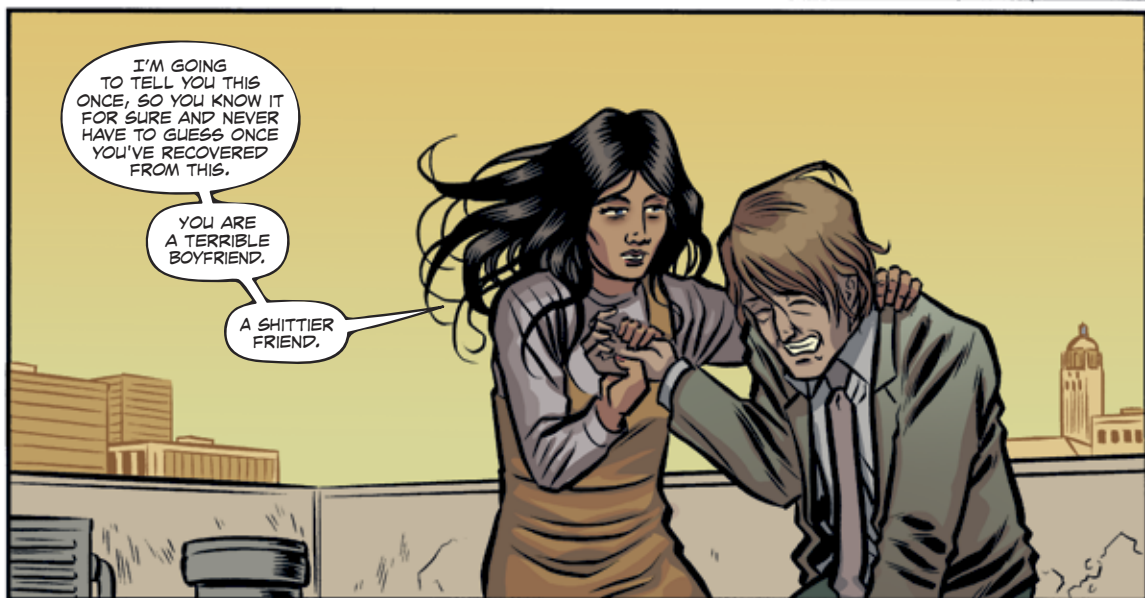
FUCKING BARRY.

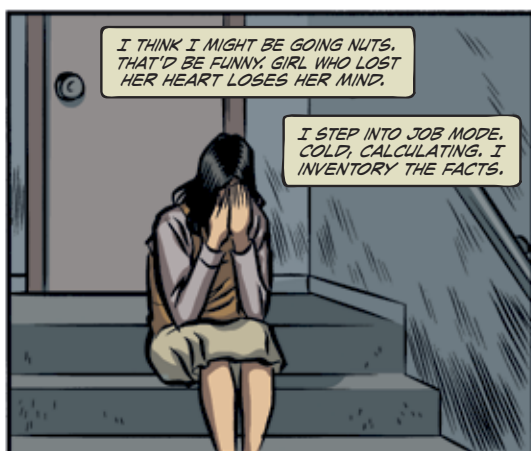
FUCKING ARCHWAY.

FUCKING EVERYTHING.









I THINK I MIGHT BE GOING NUTS.
THAT'D BE FUNNY. GIRL WHO LOST
HER HEART LOSES HER MIND.

I STEP INTO JOB MODE.
COLD, CALCULATING. I
INVENTORY THE FACTS.

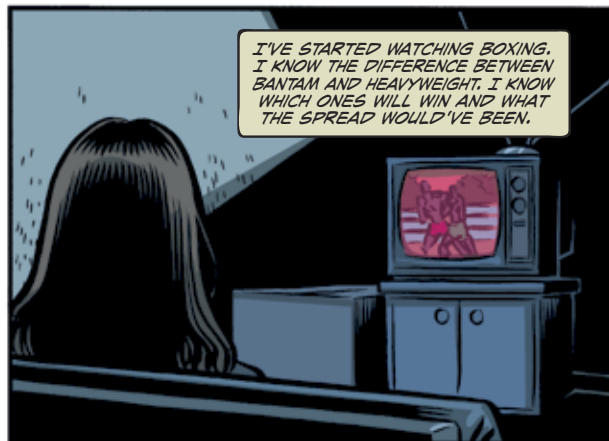


SUDDENLY HUNGRY
FOR THINGS LIKE
ANCHOVIES AND
CHUNKY PEANUT
BUTTER. STUFF
I COULD NEVER
STAND BEFORE.

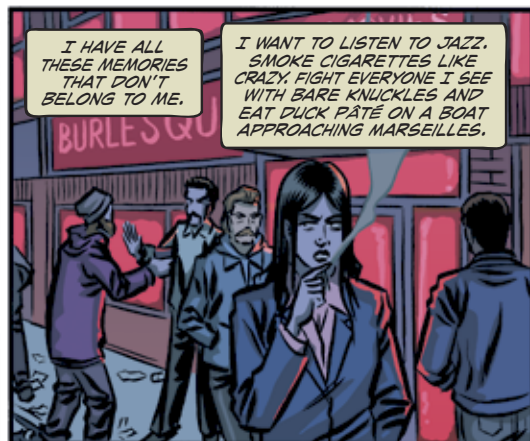


CONSTANTLY LOSING MY PATIENCE;
MAKING UP FOR IT WITH ANGER.

SWEARING, I'VE
NEVER SWORN SO
MUCH IN MY LIFE.

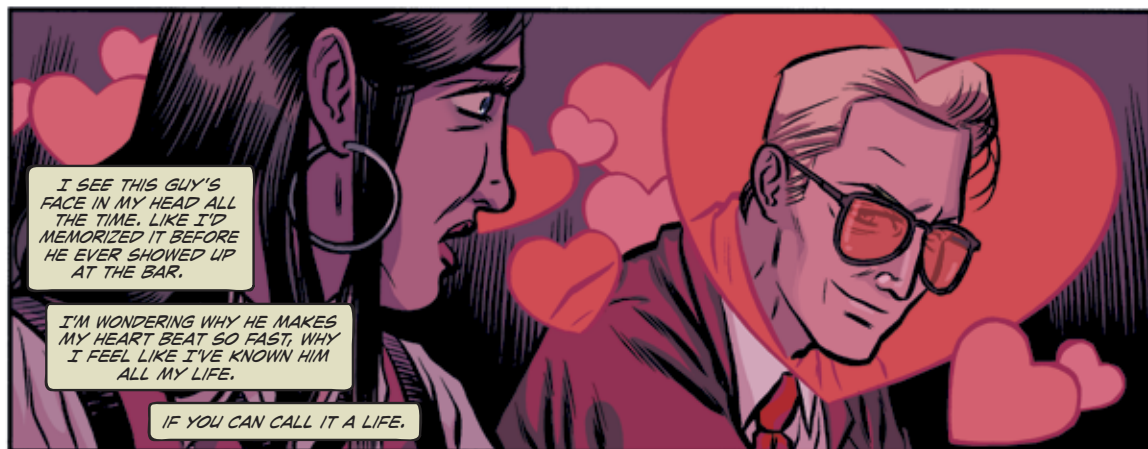


I'VE STARTED WATCHING BOXING.
I KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
BANTAM AND HEAVYWEIGHT. I KNOW
WHICH ONES WILL WIN AND WHAT
THE SPREAD WOULD'VE BEEN.



I HAVE ALL
THESE MEMORIES
THAT DON'T
BELONG TO ME.

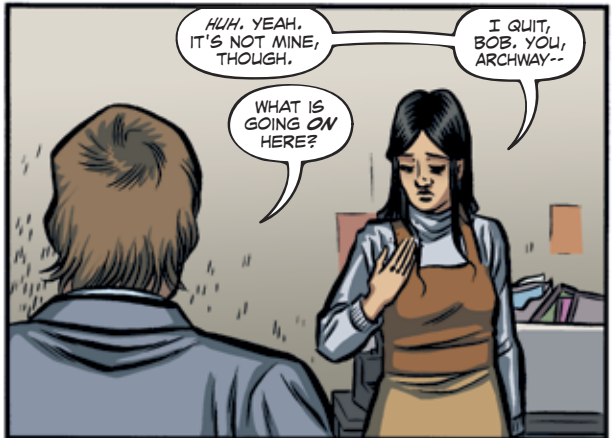
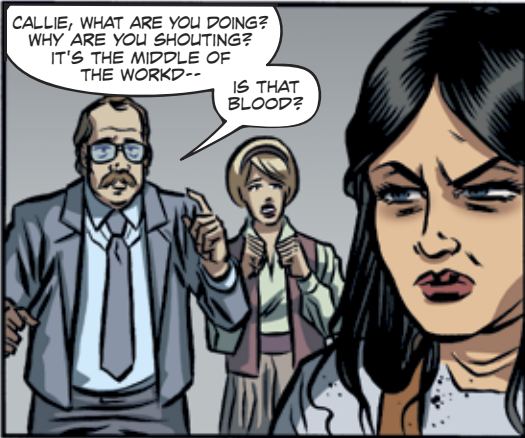
I WANT TO LISTEN TO JAZZ.
SMOKE CIGARETTES LIKE
CRAZY. FIGHT EVERYONE I SEE
WITH BARE KNUCKLES AND
EAT DUCK PÂTE ON A BOAT
APPROACHING MARSEILLES.

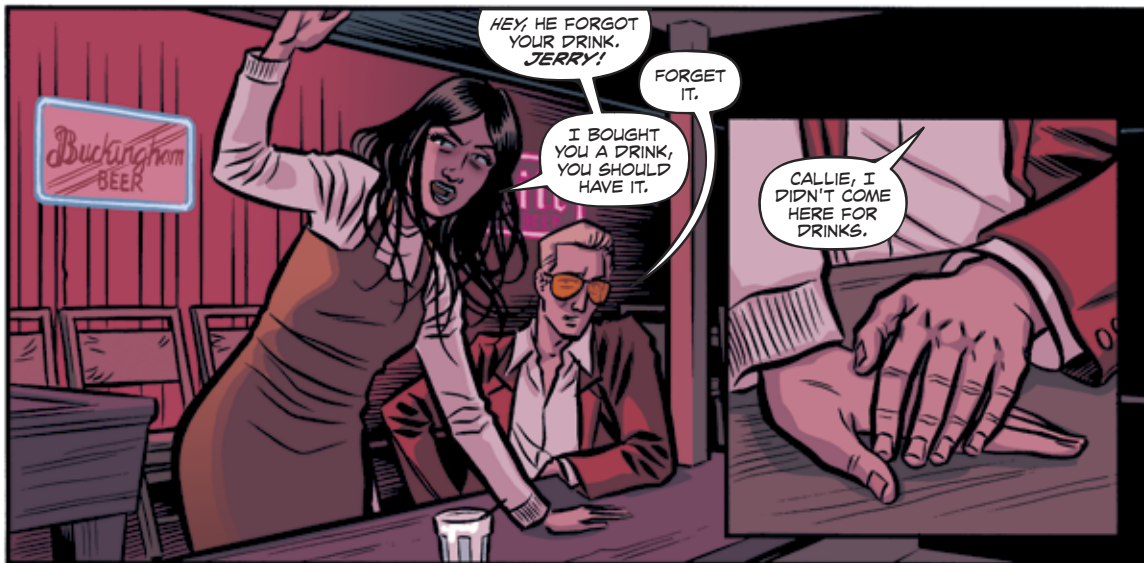
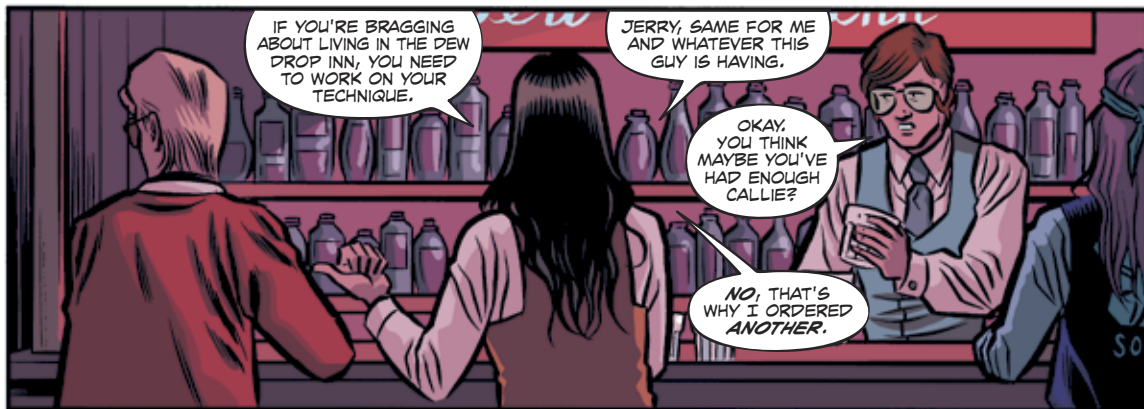


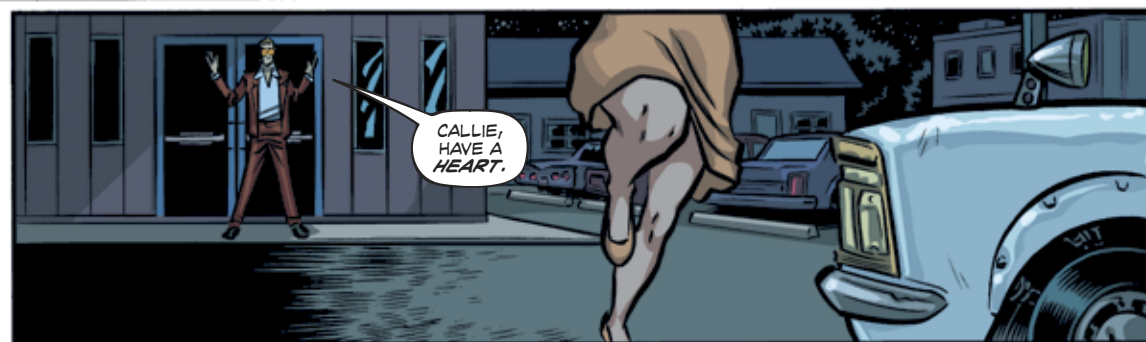
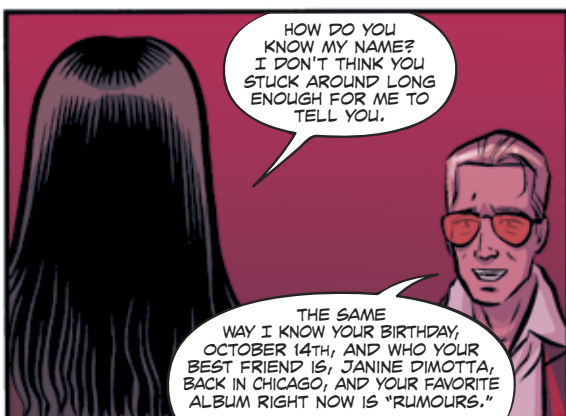
I SEE THIS GUY'S
FACE IN MY HEAD ALL
THE TIME. LIKE I'D
MEMORIZED IT BEFORE
HE EVER SHOWED UP
AT THE BAR.

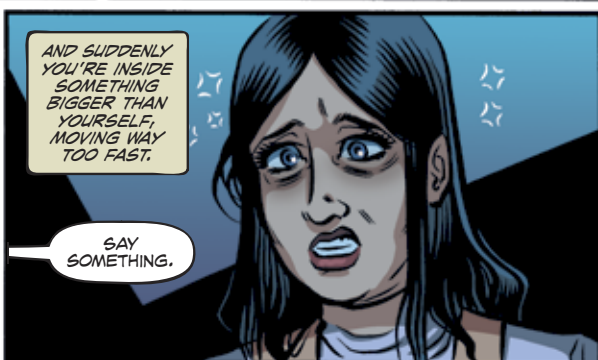
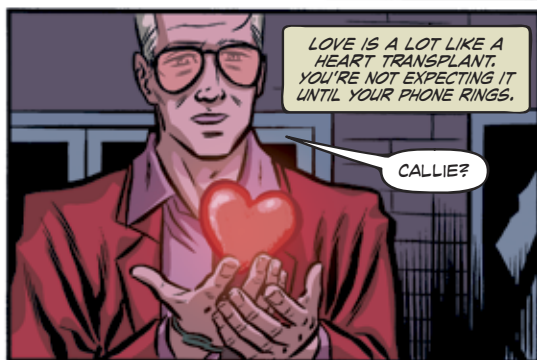
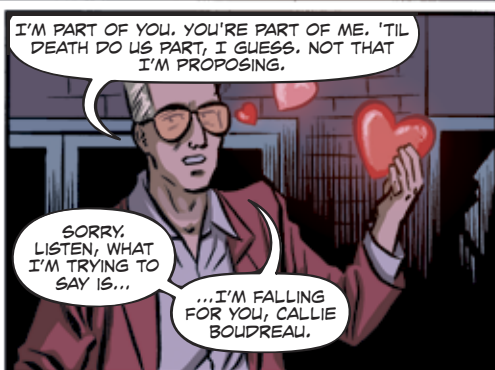
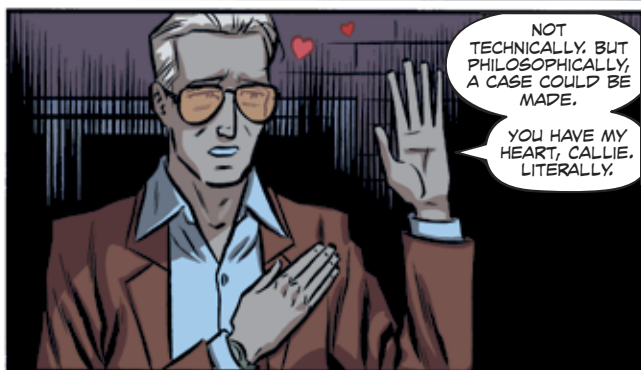
I'M WONDERING WHY HE MAKES
MY HEART BEAT SO FAST; WHY
I FEEL LIKE I'VE KNOWN HIM
ALL MY LIFE.

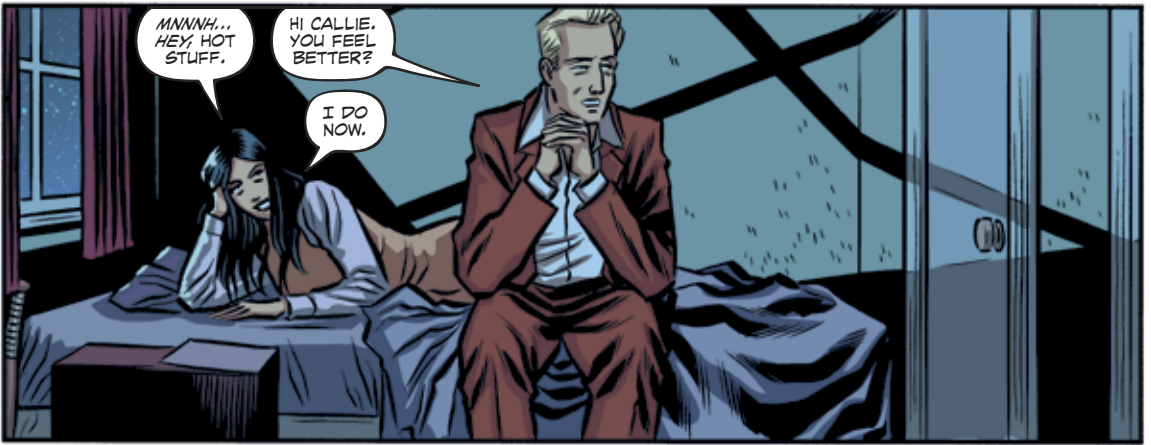
IF YOU CAN CALL IT A LIFE.











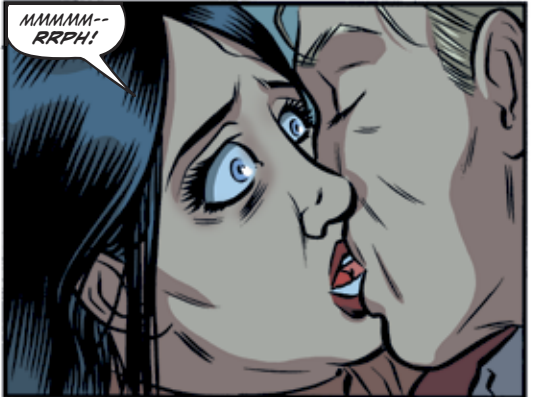
MNNNH...
HEY, HOT
STUFF.

HI CALLIE,
YOU FEEL
BETTER?

I DO
NOW.



C'MERE,
BEFORE I WAKE
UP FROM THIS
DREAM.



MMMMM--
RRPH!



SON OF A--
WHAT ARE YOU
DOING IN MY
HOUSE?

I MADE SURE
YOU GOT HOME
OKAY, REMEMBER
COMING HOME?

NO! AND I DON'T
REMEMBER LETTING SOME
STRANGER IN TO WATCH
ME SLEEP!



LISTEN, CALM DOWN, CALLIE.
IT'S NOT GOOD FOR
YOUR HEART.

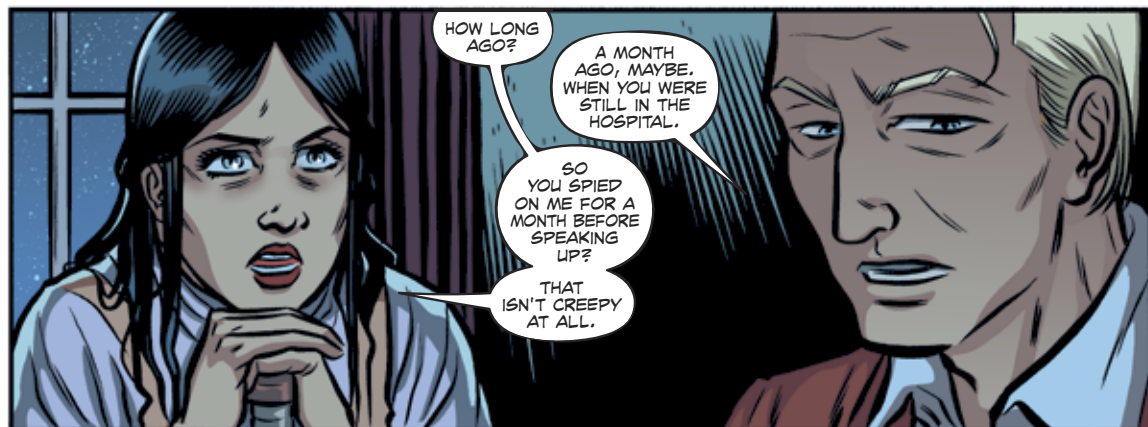
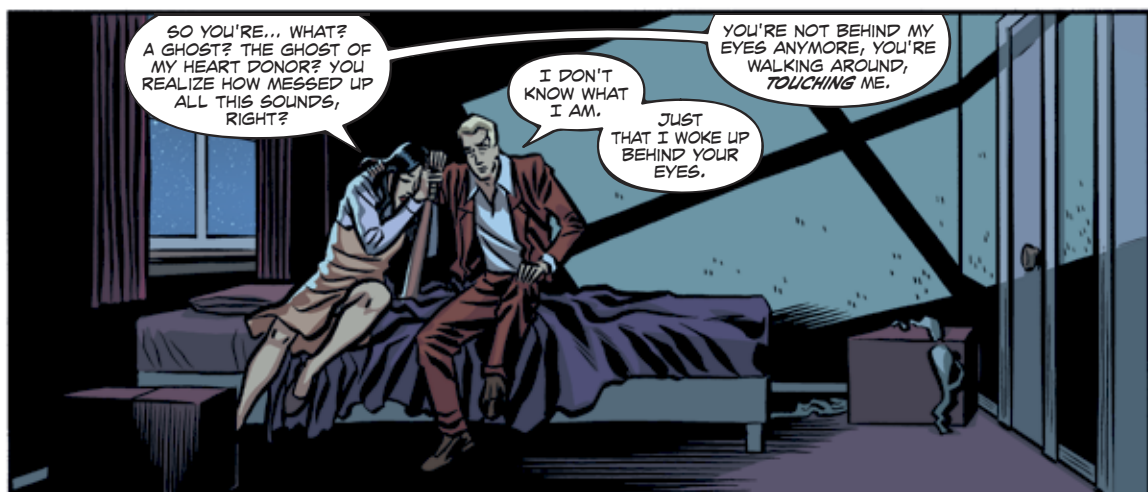
OH, GET
FUCKED. STAY AWAY
OR I'LL SMASH YOUR
BRAINS IN.

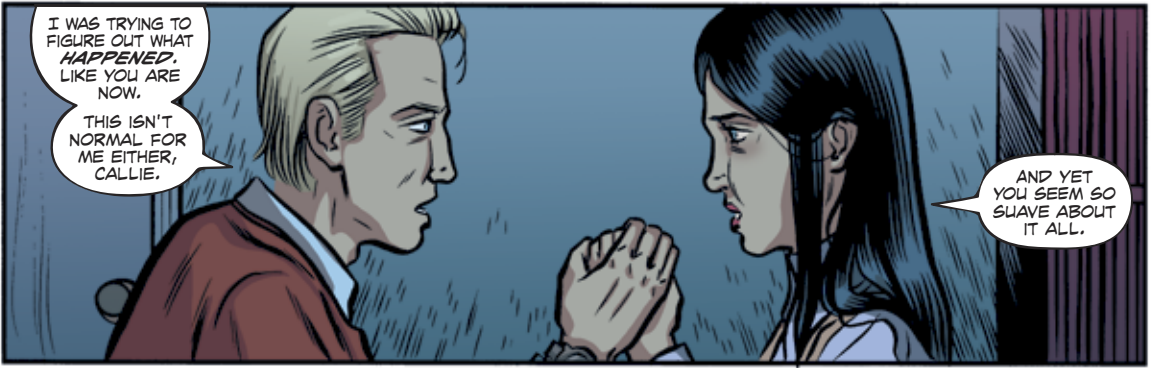
I MEAN
IT!



I DON'T
HAVE BRAINS
ANYMORE, CALLIE.
NOTHING AT
ALL.

JUST A
HEART.





I WAS TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT **HAPPENED**, LIKE YOU ARE NOW.

THIS ISN'T NORMAL FOR ME EITHER, CALLIE.

AND YET YOU SEEM SO SUAVE ABOUT IT ALL.



IT'S... IT'S LIKE YOU'RE HUMMING, LIKE AN ELECTRICAL FIELD. TOUCHING YOU IS SO... **WEIRD**.

YOU'RE THERE, BUT NOT THERE.

I'M HERE, CALLIE. I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE.



I COULDN'T, EVEN IF I WANTED TO.

PLEASE DON'T JOKE, BECAUSE IF I START LAUGHING, I'M NEVER GOING TO STOP.

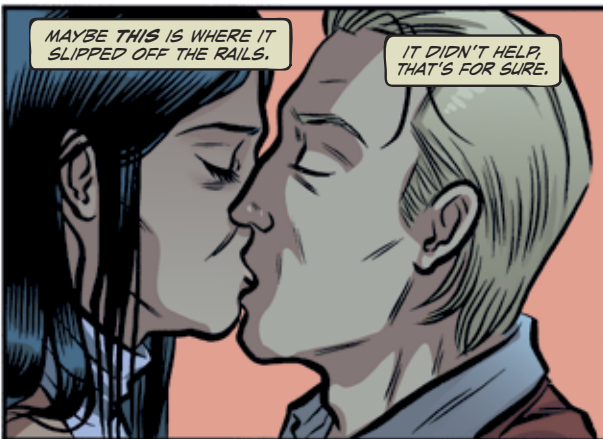


I NEED SOME TIME TO THINK.

OR IS THAT IMPOSSIBLE NOW?

NO, IT'S NOT. I CAN, I DON'T KNOW, I GO INTO THIS AUTOPILOT, I FADE OUT. IF YOU WANT ME TO. SHOULD I GO?

I...



MAYBE THIS IS WHERE IT SLIPPED OFF THE RAILS.

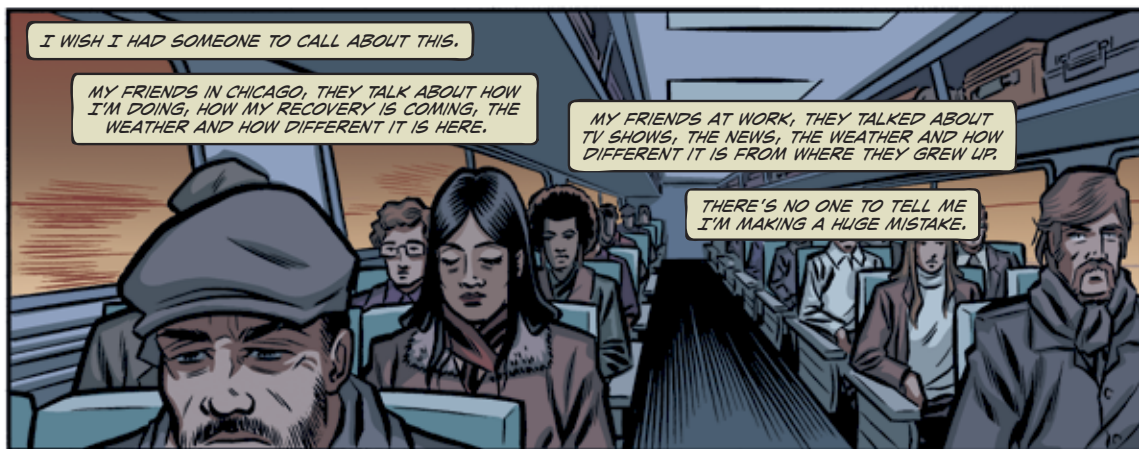
IT DIDN'T HELP, THAT'S FOR SURE.



I WANT YOU TO TAKE ME ON A DATE. IF WE'RE GOING TO DO THIS, LET'S DO IT RIGHT.

TOMORROW NIGHT, 8 P.M.

TRY AND STOP ME.

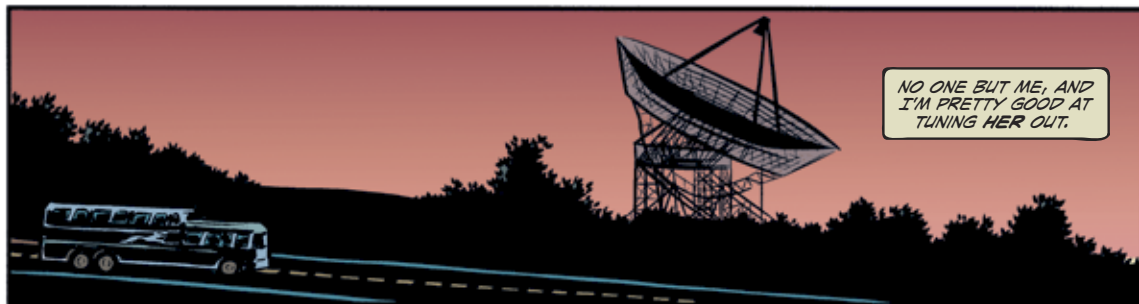


I WISH I HAD SOMEONE TO CALL ABOUT THIS.

MY FRIENDS IN CHICAGO, THEY TALK ABOUT HOW I'M DOING, HOW MY RECOVERY IS COMING, THE WEATHER AND HOW DIFFERENT IT IS HERE.

MY FRIENDS AT WORK, THEY TALKED ABOUT TV SHOWS, THE NEWS, THE WEATHER AND HOW DIFFERENT IT IS FROM WHERE THEY GREW UP.

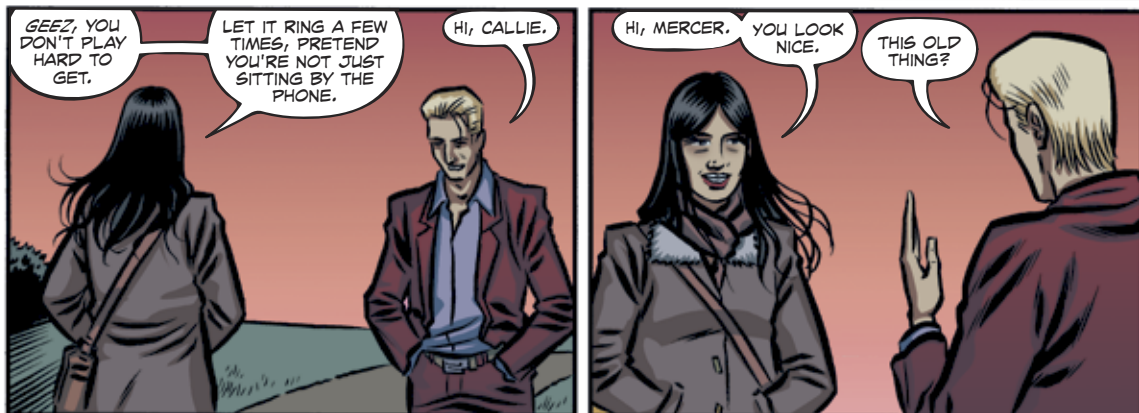
THERE'S NO ONE TO TELL ME I'M MAKING A HUGE MISTAKE.



NO ONE BUT ME, AND I'M PRETTY GOOD AT TUNING HER OUT.



I THINK ABOUT IT LIKE I'M CALLING HIM. I PICK UP THE PHONE IN MY HEAD AND HOOK MY FINGER INTO THE DIAL AND LET IT SPIN.



GEEZ, YOU DON'T PLAY HARD TO GET.

LET IT RING A FEW TIMES, PRETEND YOU'RE NOT JUST SITTING BY THE PHONE.

HI, CALLIE.

HI, MERCER. YOU LOOK NICE.

THIS OLD THING?



WELCOME TO MY FAVORITE PLACE IN THE WORLD. THIS IS THE DISH.



THIS IS YOUR FAVORITE PLACE IN THE WORLD?

I COME HERE AND WATCH THE TRAFFIC AS EVERYONE DRIVES OUT OF TOWN.

I DREAM OF BEING IN ONE OF THOSE CARS, HEADED SOMEWHERE ELSE, AS SOMEONE ELSE.



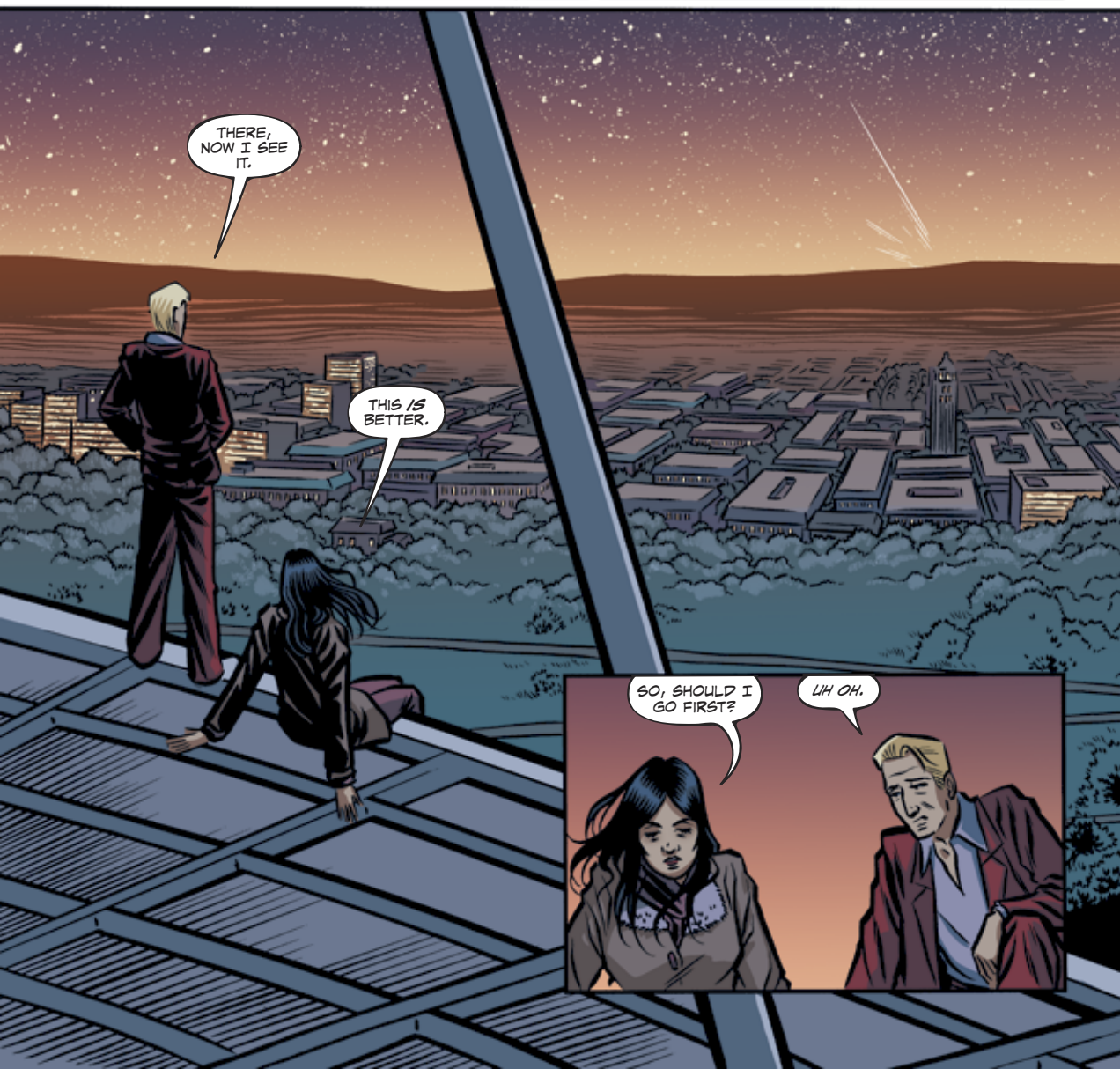
GUESS YOU TAKE YOUR BEAUTY WHERE YOU CAN FIND IT.

NO, IT'S NICE.

BUT I BET I KNOW HOW TO MAKE IT NICER.

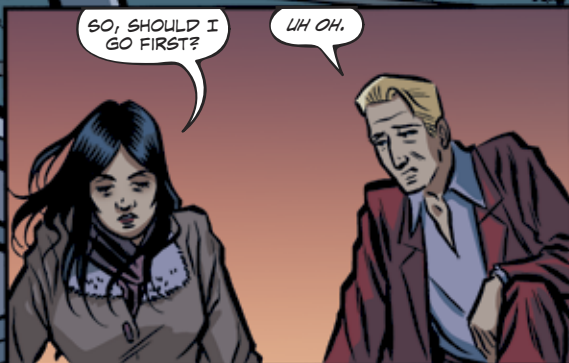


BET I CAN READ YOUR MIND.



THERE, NOW I SEE IT.

THIS IS BETTER.



SO, SHOULD I GO FIRST?

LIIH OH.

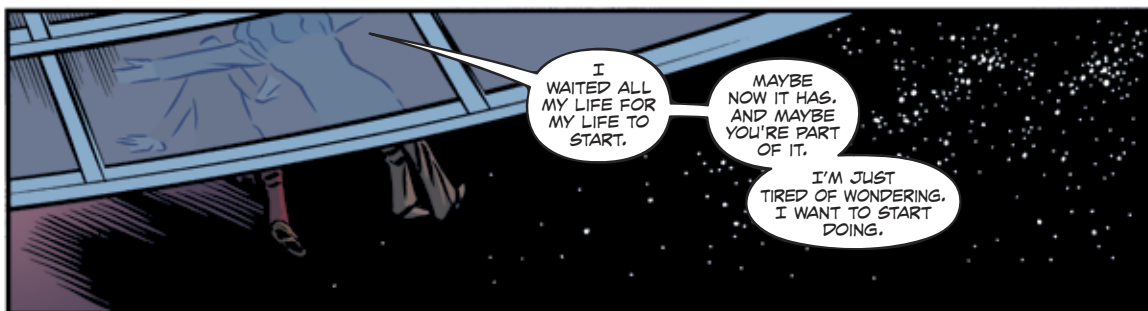


NO, IT'S
GOOD.
I THINK
IT'S GOOD.

I'M
FALLING FOR
YOU, TOO, MERCER.
I DON'T KNOW WHY.
A WEEK AGO I
DIDN'T KNOW
YOU.

YOU'RE MY HEART
DONOR. SO EITHER
YOU'RE DEAD OR
IMAGINARY.

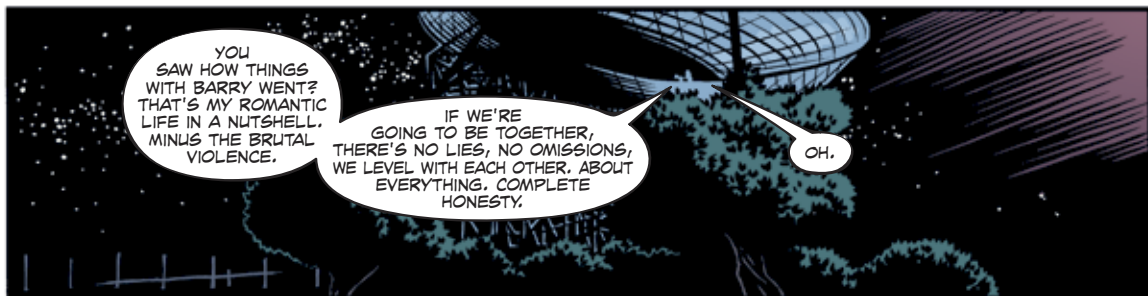
I DON'T
CARE. YOU'RE THE
ONLY THING IN MY LIFE
THAT REALLY MAKES
SENSE RIGHT
NOW.



I
WAITED ALL
MY LIFE FOR
MY LIFE TO
START.

MAYBE
NOW IT HAS.
AND MAYBE
YOU'RE PART
OF IT.

I'M JUST
TIRED OF WONDERING.
I WANT TO START
DOING.



YOU
SAW HOW THINGS
WITH BARRY WENT?
THAT'S MY ROMANTIC
LIFE IN A NUTSHELL.
MINUS THE BRUTAL
VIOLENCE.

IF WE'RE
GOING TO BE TOGETHER,
THERE'S NO LIES, NO OMISSIONS,
WE LEVEL WITH EACH OTHER, ABOUT
EVERYTHING. COMPLETE
HONESTY.

OH.



I THOUGHT
SO. TELL ME,
MERCER.

HOW BAD
IS IT?

NO, IT'S
GOOD.

I THINK
IT'S VERY
GOOD.

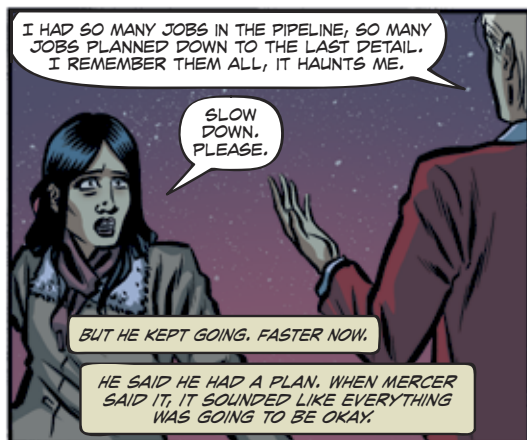


"I'M A THIEF, A GREAT THIEF, ACTUALLY," HE SAID. AND ONCE I MANAGED TO PROCESS THAT, HE TOLD ME JUST HOW GREAT.

AFTER-HOURS JOBS, SAFECRACKING, PRICELESS WORKS OF ART, SACKS OF CASH; HE'D DONE THEM ALL; HE EXPLAINED THEM IN EXHAUSTIVE DETAIL.

ALL I COULD DO WAS LISTEN. FIRST IN SHOCK, THEN HORROR, THEN SOMETHING LIKE ADMIRATION, THEN SOMETHING LIKE ENVY.

BUT HE WASN'T DONE YET.



I HAD SO MANY JOBS IN THE PIPELINE, SO MANY JOBS PLANNED DOWN TO THE LAST DETAIL. I REMEMBER THEM ALL, IT HAUNTS ME.

SLOW DOWN, PLEASE.

BUT HE KEPT GOING. FASTER NOW.

HE SAID HE HAD A PLAN. WHEN MERCER SAID IT, IT SOUNDED LIKE EVERYTHING WAS GOING TO BE OKAY.

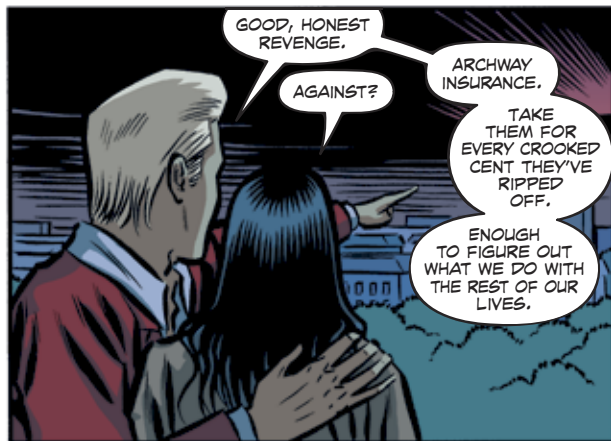


I CAN TEACH YOU.

I'M AN UNEMPLOYED INSURANCE INVESTIGATOR. I'M NOT A THIEF, MERCER. I DON'T STEAL.

I DON'T MEAN STEALING, CALLIE. NOT EXACTLY.

WHAT THEN?



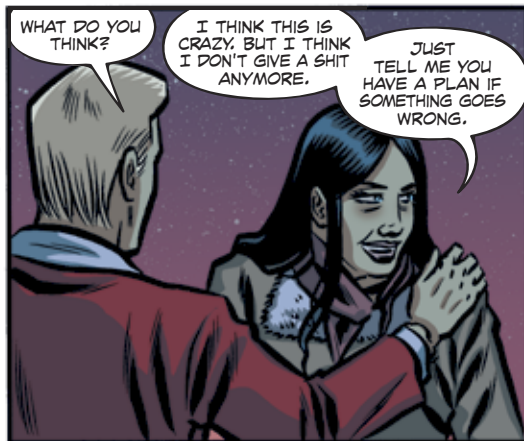
GOOD, HONEST REVENGE.

AGAINST?

ARCHWAY INSURANCE.

TAKE THEM FOR EVERY CROOKED CENT THEY'VE RIPPED OFF.

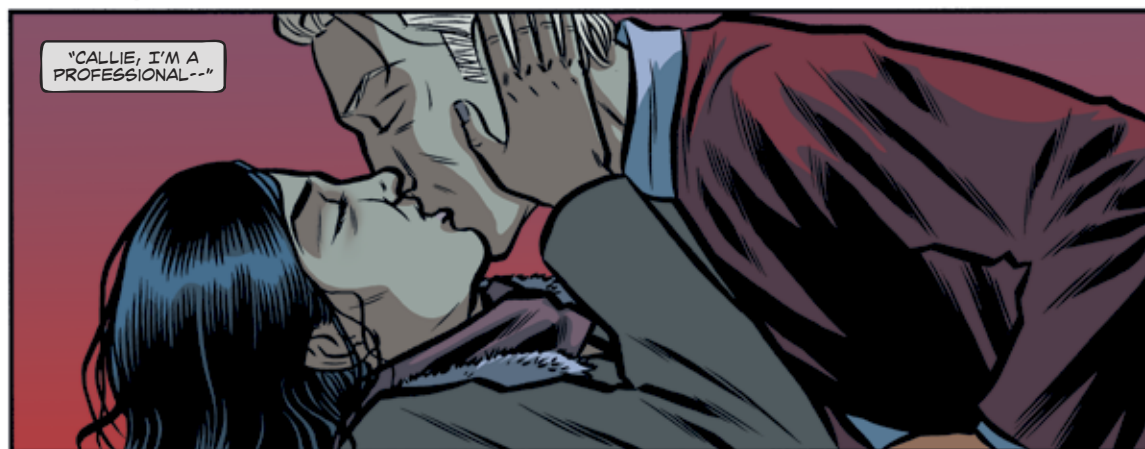
ENOUGH TO FIGURE OUT WHAT WE DO WITH THE REST OF OUR LIVES.



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I THINK THIS IS CRAZY. BUT I THINK I DON'T GIVE A SHIT ANYMORE.

JUST TELL ME YOU HAVE A PLAN IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG.



"CALLIE, I'M A PROFESSIONAL--"



"--NOTHING WILL GO WRONG."

ATTENTION
INSIDE!



YOU ARE
SURROUNDED.

"YOU SWEAR,
MERCER?"



THROW
DOWN YOUR
WEAPONS.

"SCOUT'S HONOR.

"AND BESIDES..."



AND COME
OUT WITH YOUR
HANDS UP.

"...I'LL NEVER LEAVE YOU."

"SOUNDS LIKE A COMMITMENT."



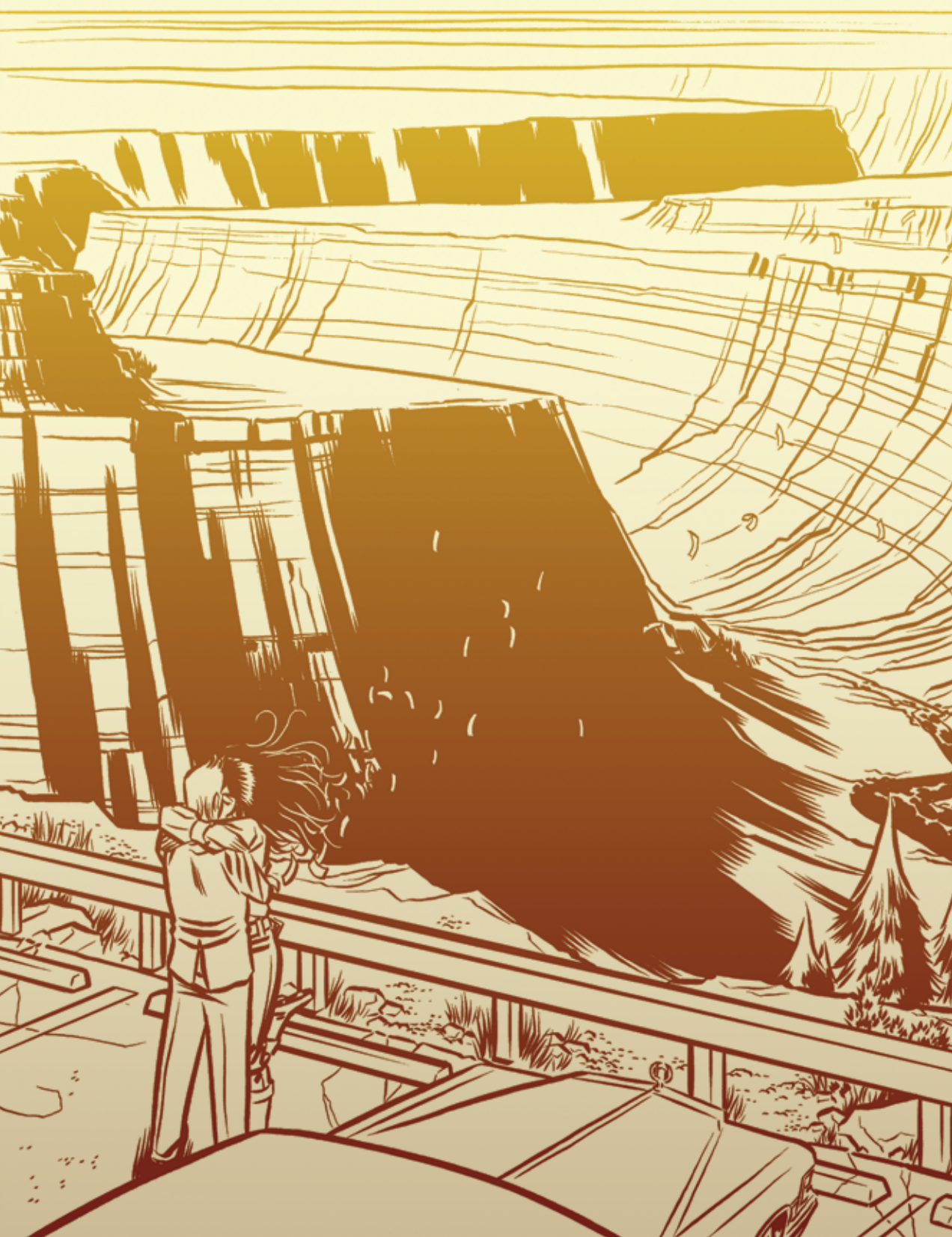
THIS
IS YOUR
FINAL WARNING
BEFORE WE
COME IN.

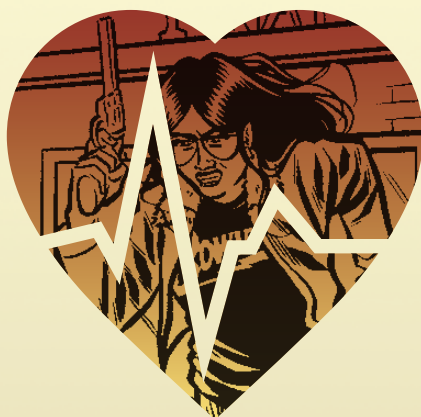
"IT IS. YOU AND ME,
TOGETHER FOREVER."

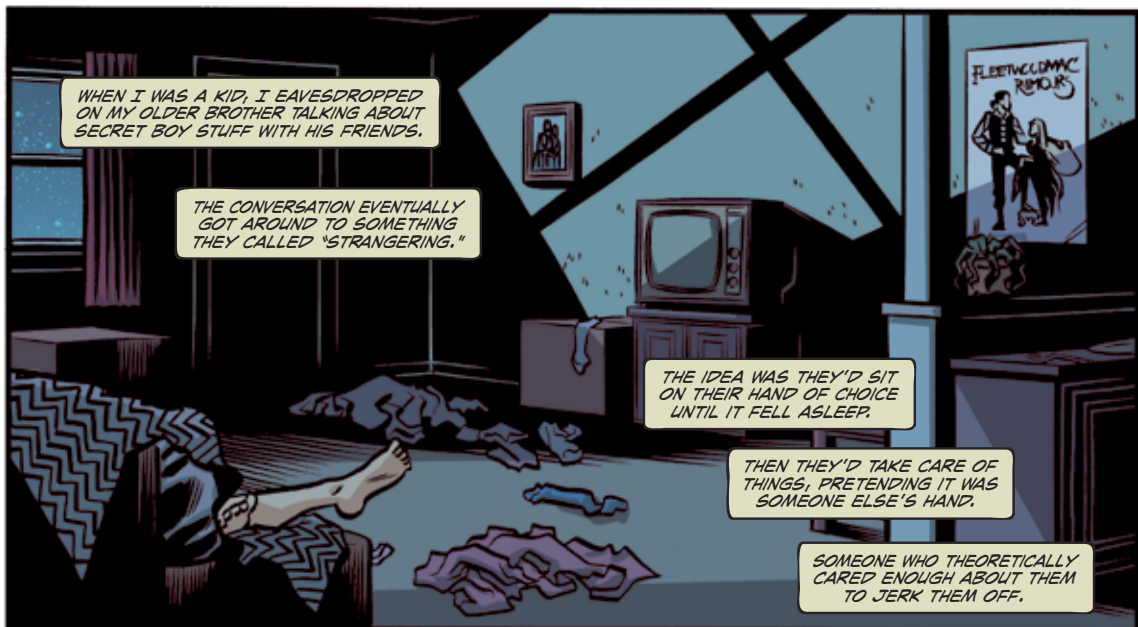
MERCER?

WHERE
ARE YOU,
MERCER?

CHAPTER 2







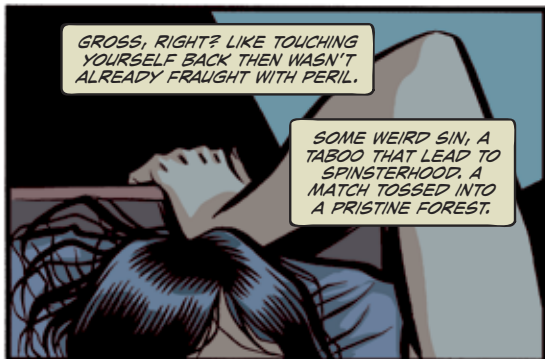
WHEN I WAS A KID, I EAVESDROPPED ON MY OLDER BROTHER TALKING ABOUT SECRET BOY STUFF WITH HIS FRIENDS.

THE CONVERSATION EVENTUALLY GOT AROUND TO SOMETHING THEY CALLED "STRANGERING."

THE IDEA WAS THEY'D SIT ON THEIR HAND OF CHOICE UNTIL IT FELL ASLEEP.

THEN THEY'D TAKE CARE OF THINGS, PRETENDING IT WAS SOMEONE ELSE'S HAND.

SOMEONE WHO THEORETICALLY CARED ENOUGH ABOUT THEM TO JERK THEM OFF.



GROSS, RIGHT? LIKE TOUCHING YOURSELF BACK THEN WASN'T ALREADY FRAUGHT WITH PERIL.

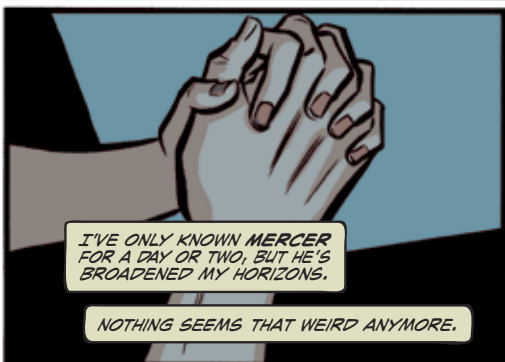
SOME WEIRD SIN, A TABOO THAT LEAD TO SPINSTERHOOD, A MATCH TOSSED INTO A PRISTINE FOREST.



THEN I MANAGED TO CRAM THIS HORROR SHOW INTO MY YOUNG IMPRESSIONABLE HEAD TO SOMEHOW MAKE IT WORSE.



I'M NOT A PRUDE, BUT THAT WAS MY HEIGHT OF WEIRDNESS FOR A LONG TIME.



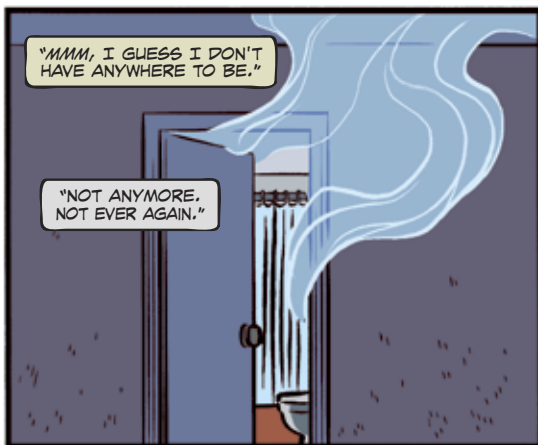
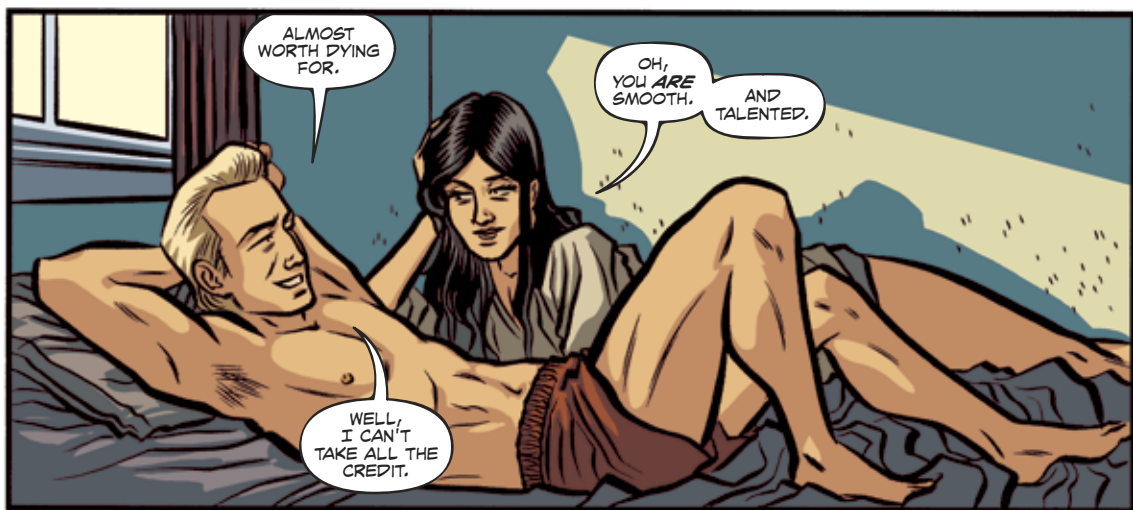
I'VE ONLY KNOWN MERCER FOR A DAY OR TWO, BUT HE'S BROADENED MY HORIZONS.

NOTHING SEEMS THAT WEIRD ANYMORE.

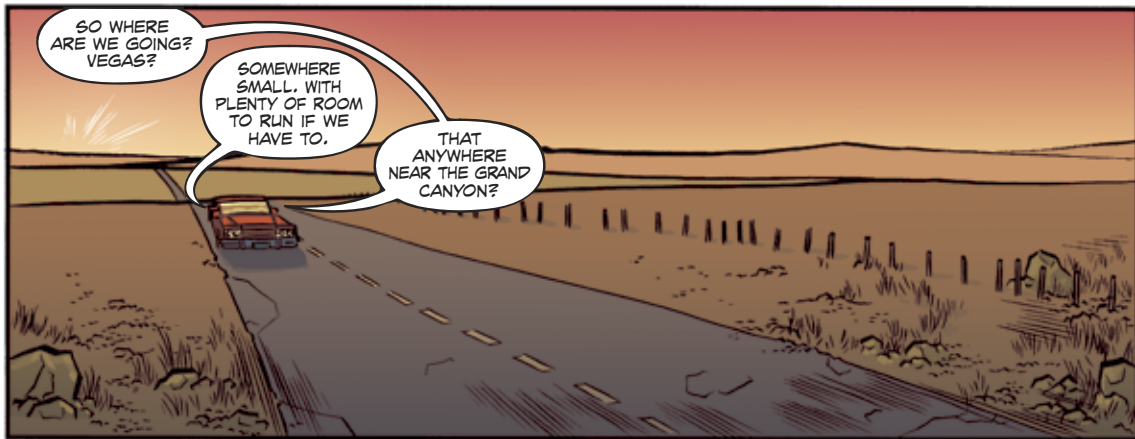
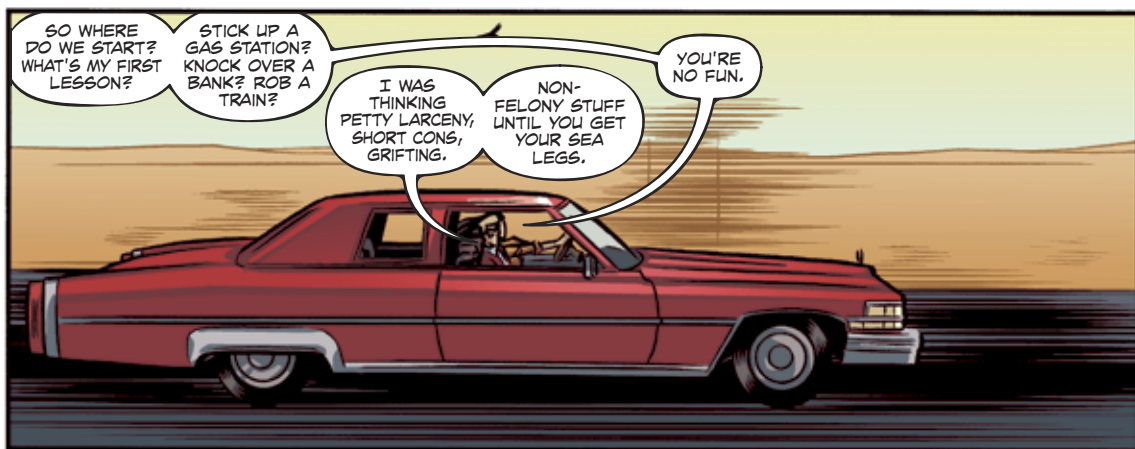


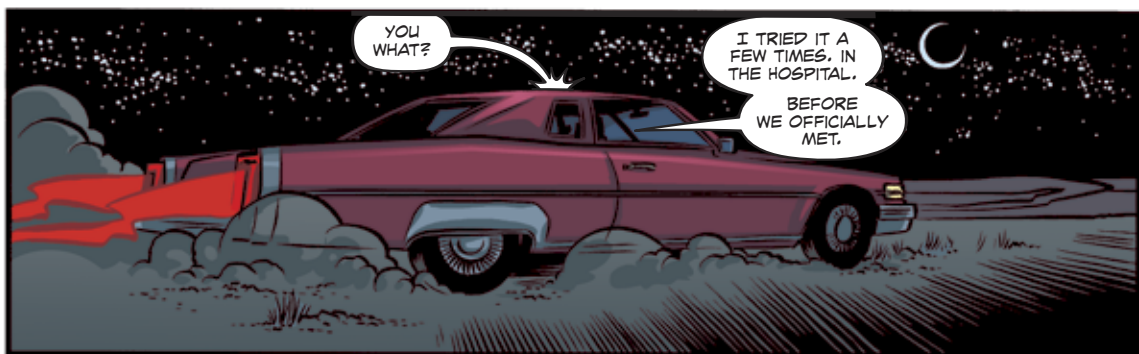
WAS IT GOOD FOR YOU?

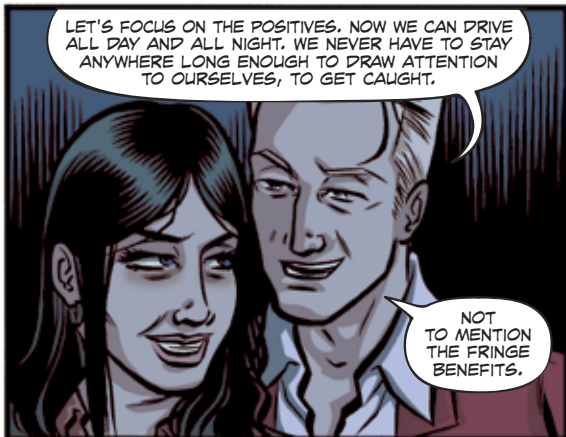
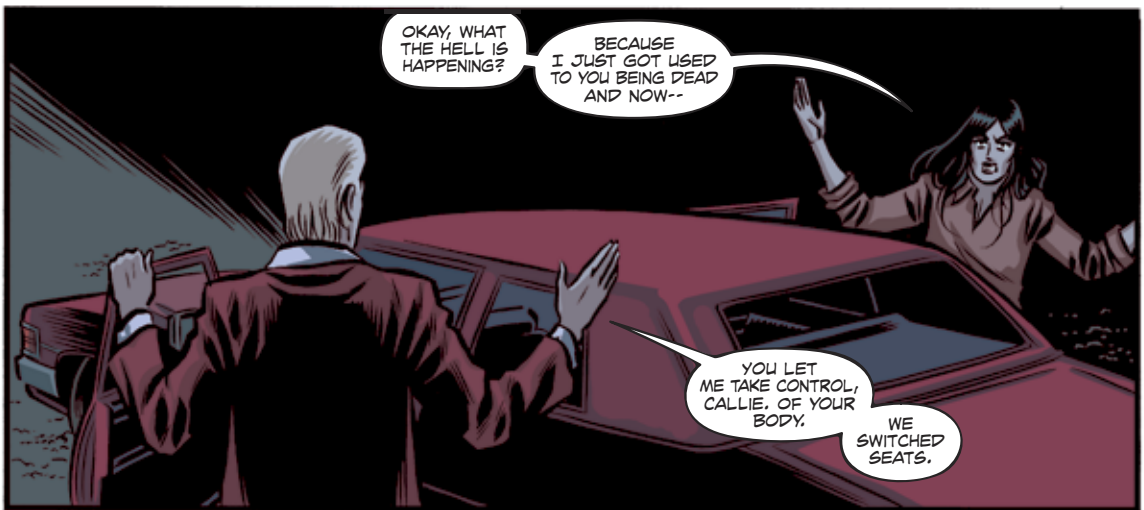
BECAUSE NOTHING COULD BE STRANGER THAN THIS.

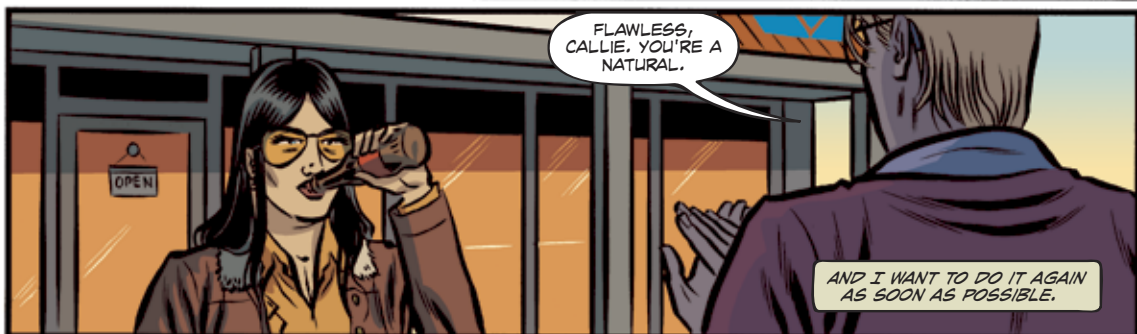
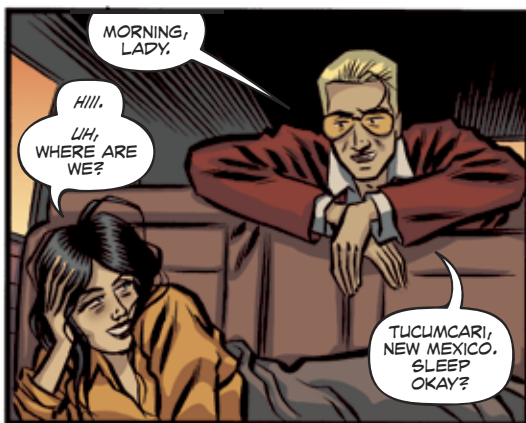


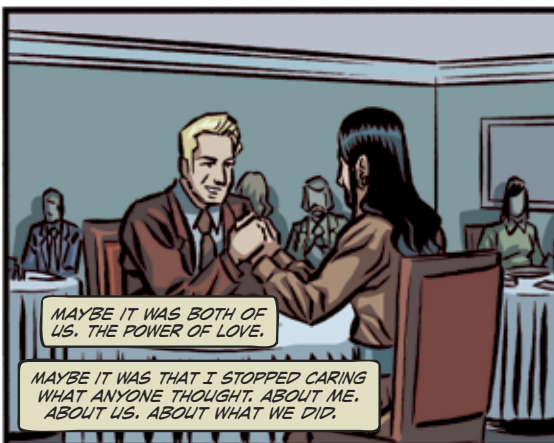
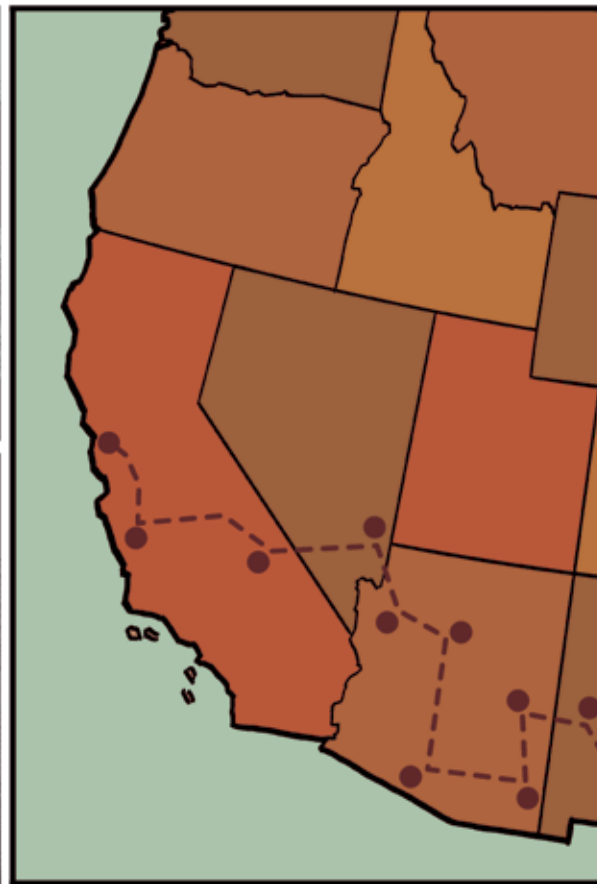












WE WERE LIKE KIDS, OR WHAT I IMAGINED KIDS WERE SUPPOSED TO BE LIKE.

WE DID WHAT WE WANTED, WHEN WE WANTED.

MY SUMMER AS AN OUTLAW.

LESSON 7:
BREAKING
& ENTERING
(BRUTE FORCE
VERSION)

WE STOLE JUST ENOUGH TO PAY FOR GAS AND FOOD.

AND A FEW OTHER THINGS.

IT TURNS OUT I'M A NATURAL.

MERCER SAID I WAS THE BEST THIEF HE'D MET IN YEARS.

LESSON 12: PICKPOCKETING.

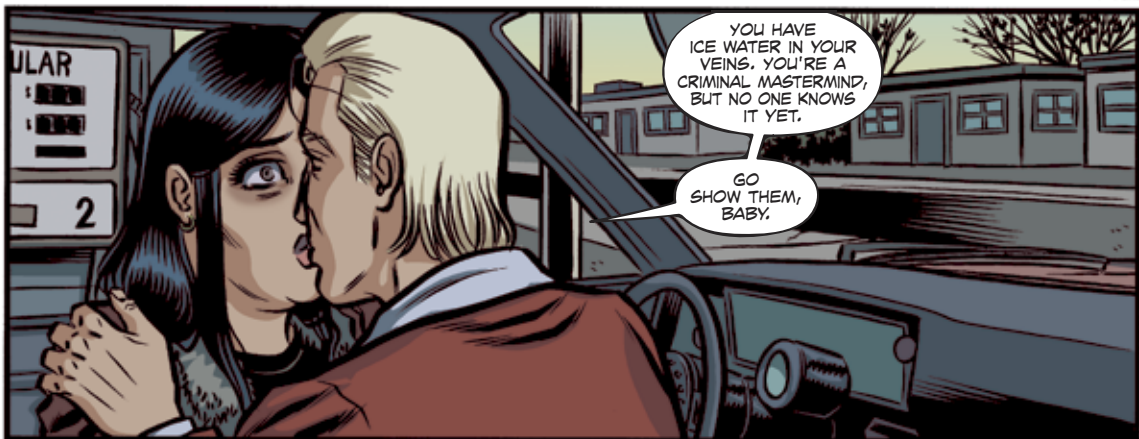
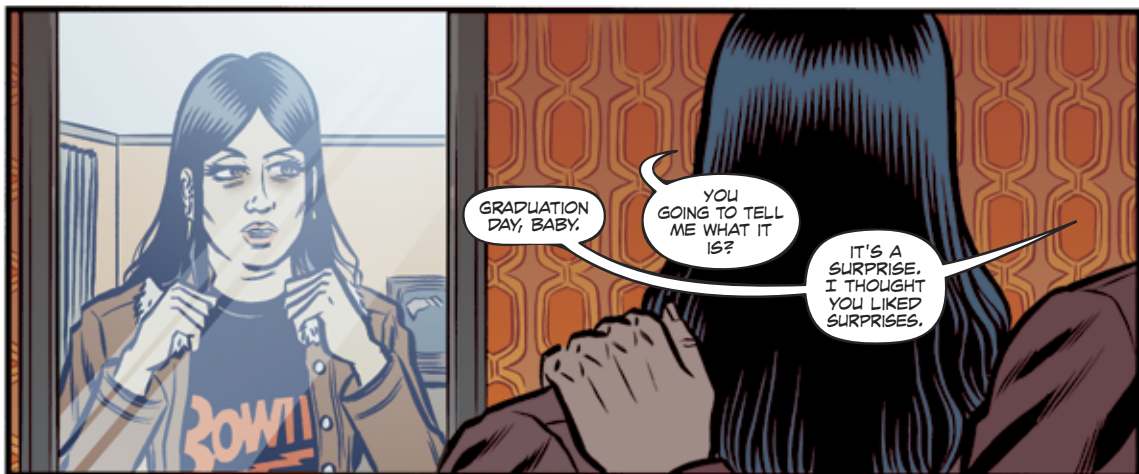
AND I FELT LOVED, FOR THE FIRST TIME MAYBE EVER.

I FELT SAFE.

I FELT USEFUL FOR THE FIRST TIME MAYBE EVER.

I FELT LIKE I WAS CAPABLE OF ANYTHING.

LESSON 19: FIREARMS.



LESSON 40: ROB A BANK.

NO, SERIOUSLY.

FIRST THING MERCER SAID I NEEDED WAS A HUGE PURSE. STILL FIGURING OUT HOW TO CARRY THIS GIANT MONSTROSITY AROUND SO IT FEELS NORMAL.

INSIDE IS A STUN GUN, A HANDGUN, TWO STICKS OF DYNAMITE AND BURLAP BAG.

I'M SHAKING LIKE A LEAF TRYING TO KEEP IT TOGETHER.

I LET THE SONG PLAY IN MY HEAD.

WE CAME UP WITH IT TOGETHER. A SONG LONG ENOUGH TO COVER ANY SORT OF JOB. FOUR MINUTES SIXTEEN SECONDS. FORTY-FOUR SECONDS SHY OF STANDARD POLICE RESPONSE TIME.

"THE CHAIN."

TRACK ONE, SIDE TWO OF RUMOURS.

BY THE TIME THE CHORUS COMES BACK AGAIN, I'M SLIPPING THE TELLER MY NOTE.

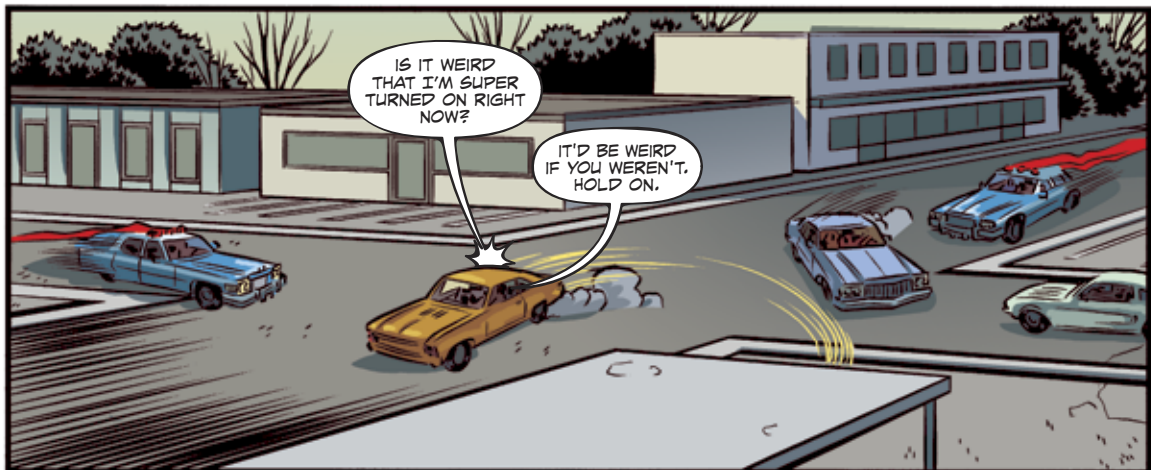
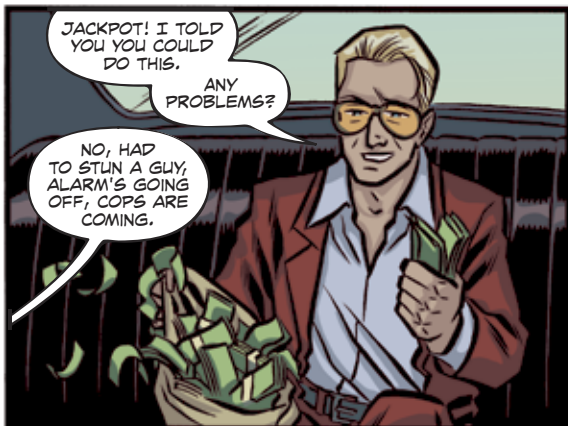
THEN IT'S SILENCE.

THEN THE BASS SOLO STARTS AND MY SKIN GOOSEBUMPS.

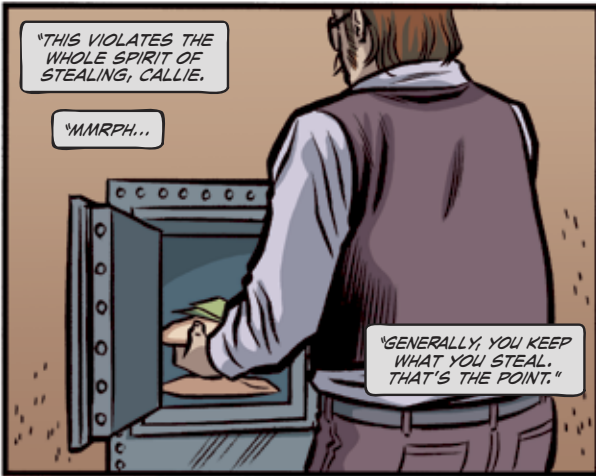
NINETY SECONDS.

ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN.









"THIS VIOLATES THE WHOLE SPIRIT OF STEALING, CALLIE."

"MMRPH..."

"GENERALLY, YOU KEEP WHAT YOU STEAL. THAT'S THE POINT."



"WE ONLY KEEP WHAT WE NEED. WE GIVE THE REST BACK. THAT'S THE RULE."

"MMMMH..."

"JUST BECAUSE WE STEAL DOESN'T MEAN WE HAVE TO BE ASSHOLES."

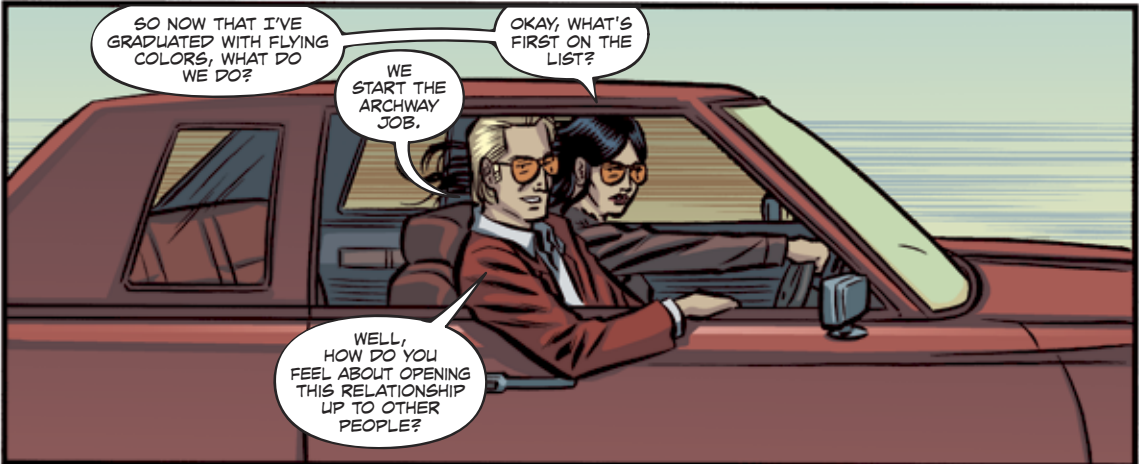


"CALLIE, JUST BECAUSE YOU GIVE IT BACK DOESN'T MEAN THEY WON'T COME--MMM--LOOKING FOR YOU."

"IT'S A TINY BANK--MMM--WE HARDLY KEPT ANYTHING, WHO IS GONNA CARE?"



AGENT ALONZO?



SO NOW THAT I'VE GRADUATED WITH FLYING COLORS, WHAT DO WE DO?

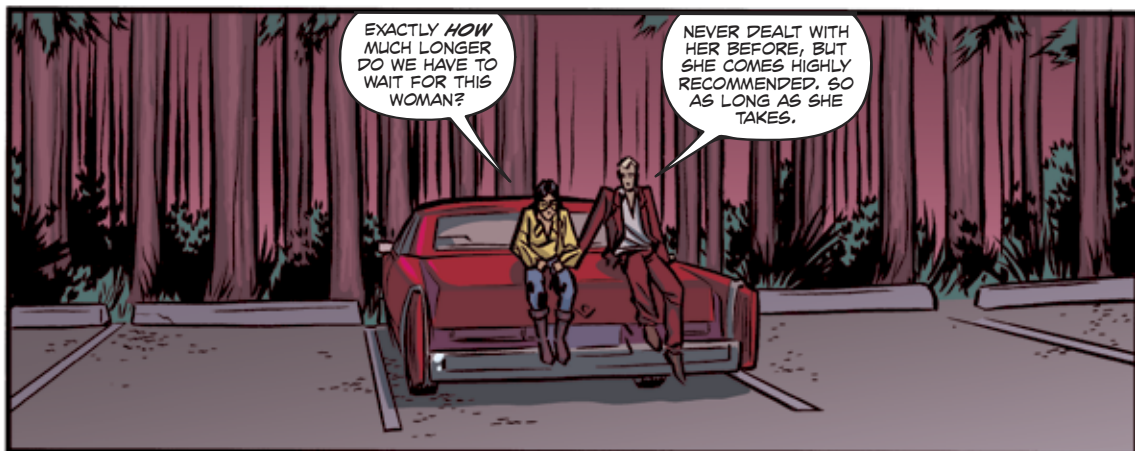
WE START THE ARCHWAY JOB.

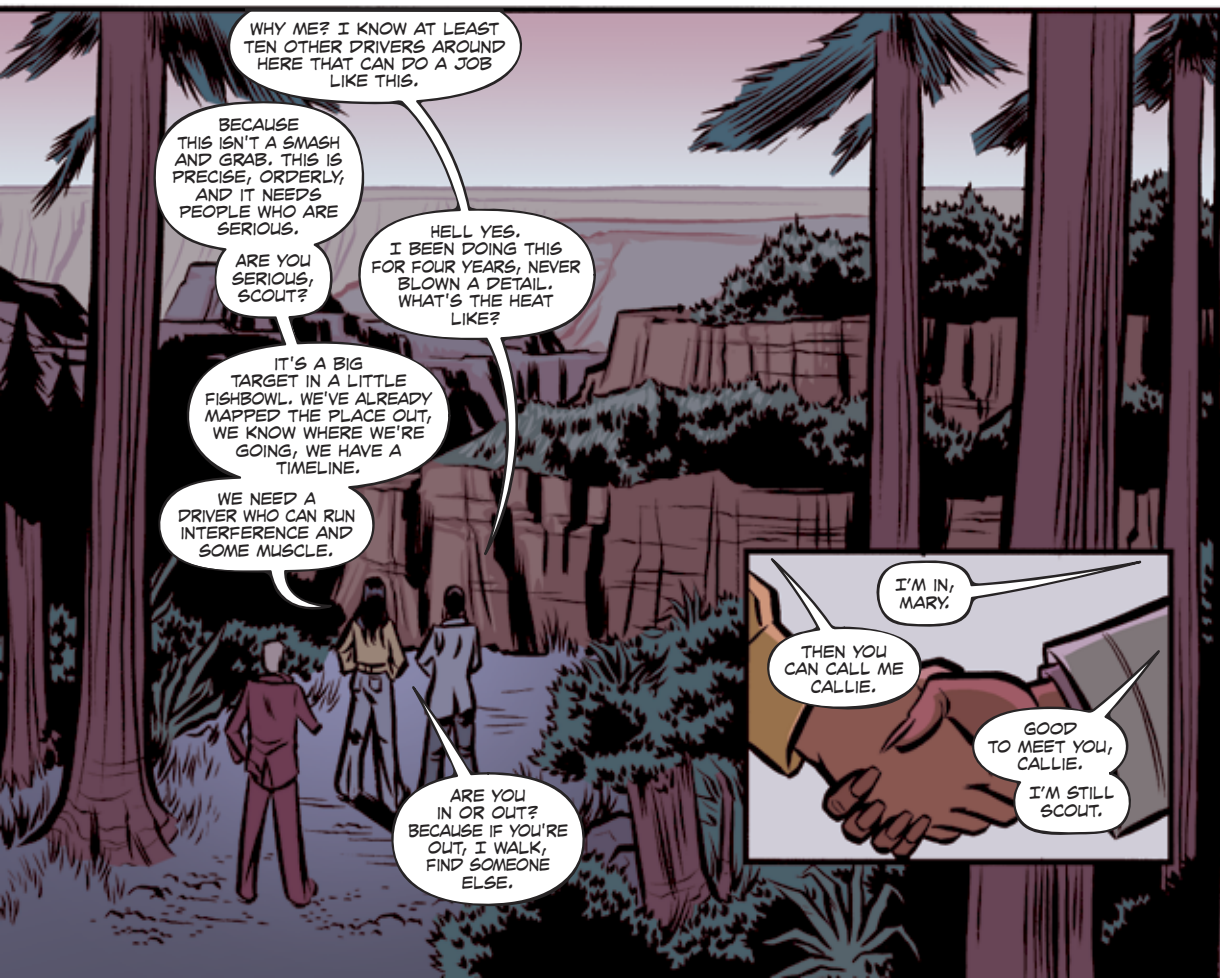
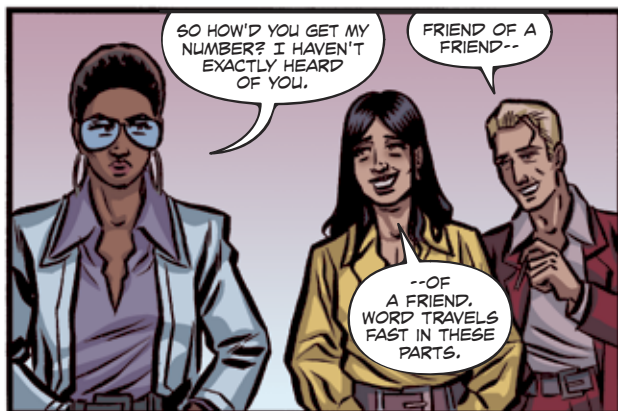
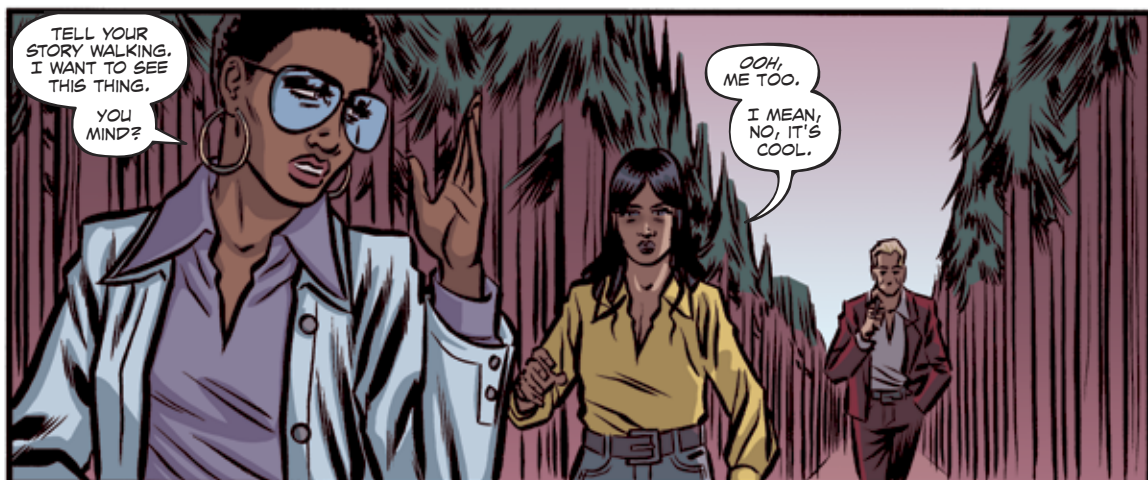
OKAY, WHAT'S FIRST ON THE LIST?

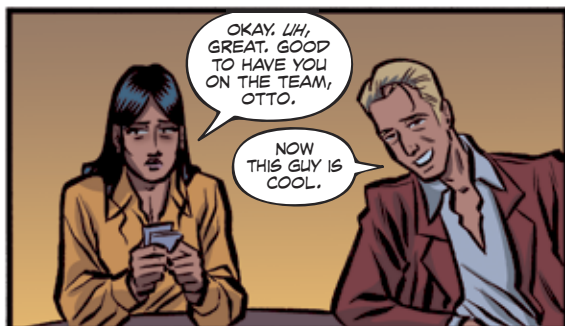
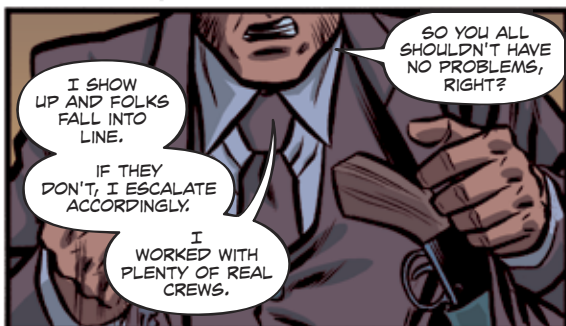
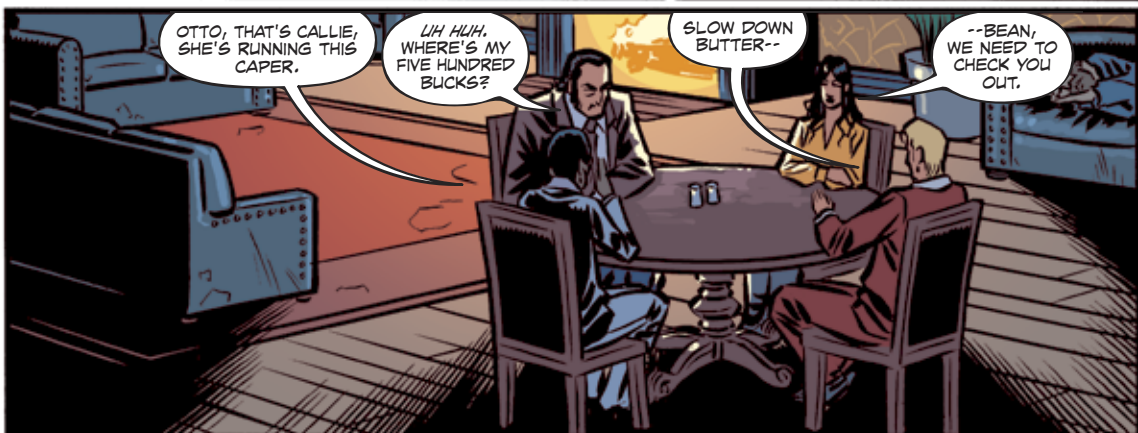
WELL, HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT OPENING THIS RELATIONSHIP UP TO OTHER PEOPLE?



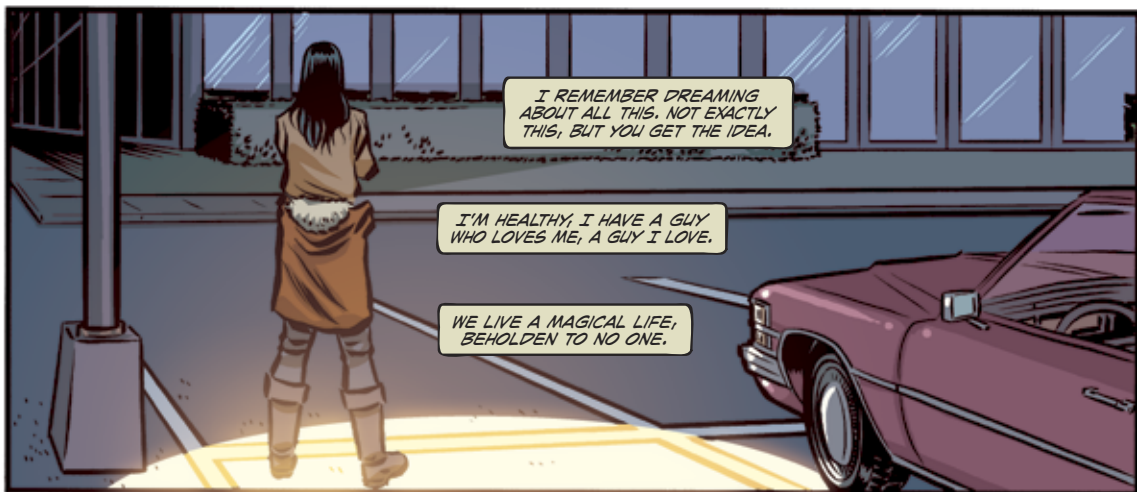
SKREEEEEE











I REMEMBER DREAMING ABOUT ALL THIS. NOT EXACTLY THIS, BUT YOU GET THE IDEA.

I'M HEALTHY, I HAVE A GUY WHO LOVES ME, A GUY I LOVE.

WE LIVE A MAGICAL LIFE, BEHOLDEN TO NO ONE.



I KNOW I SHOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR EVERYTHING.

BUT EVERY NOW AND THEN I REALIZE JUST HOW DEEP I'M GETTING.

AND I THINK ABOUT WHO I WAS ALL MY LIFE, HELL, ONLY HALF A YEAR AGO, HOW SHE WOULD HAVE BEEN TERRIFIED.



SHE WOULD HAVE TOLD ME TO STOP. TO LOOK AROUND. TO THINK ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES.

SHE WOULD HAVE REMINDED ME THAT THIS ISN'T WHO I AM.



I'M SO GLAD SHE'S GONE.

I DON'T CARE WHERE SHE WENT.

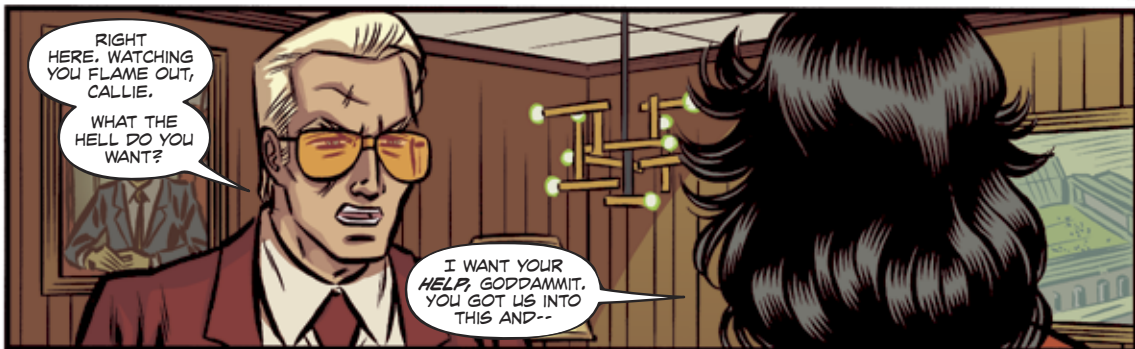
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS NEXT, I HAD MY PERFECT SUMMER.



I HAVE SOMEONE WHO LOVES ME.

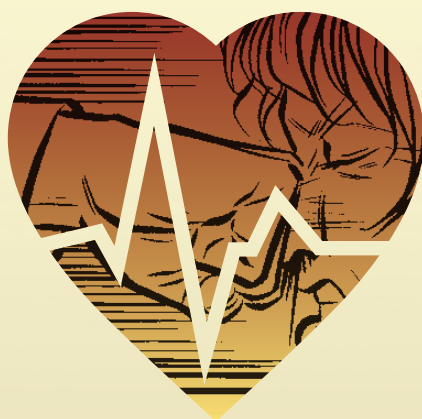
AND AS WEIRD AND DANGEROUS AND FICTIONAL AS MERCER AND ALL THIS SEEMS? IF I'M CRAZY OR SOMETHING?

I HOPE IT NEVER ENDS.



CHAPTER 3







WELL?

NOT SURE, AGENT ALONZO. WE'RE STILL PUTTING IT TOGETHER.

UH HUH, AND IT'S AN INSURANCE COMPANY, JOHNSON. I HANDLE **BANKS**, ARMORED CARS. WHY AM I HERE?

THE VAULT, SIR.

THEY CLEANED IT OUT, TOOK EVERY SCRAP OF CASH IN THERE.

FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND, GIVE OR TAKE.



WHY'S AN INSURANCE COMPANY HAVE THAT MUCH CASH LYING AROUND? OR A VAULT?

WELL, SIR... FEDERAL LAW REQUIRES THEY HAVE ENOUGH CASH TO COVER ANY POSSIBLE PAYMENTS. IT WAS ESTABLISHED BACK IN--



LEADS?

ONE. GUY WHO WORKS HERE SAYS HE KNOWS WHO DID IT.



CALLIE BOUDREAU.

WANT HER ADDRESS? PHONE NUMBER?

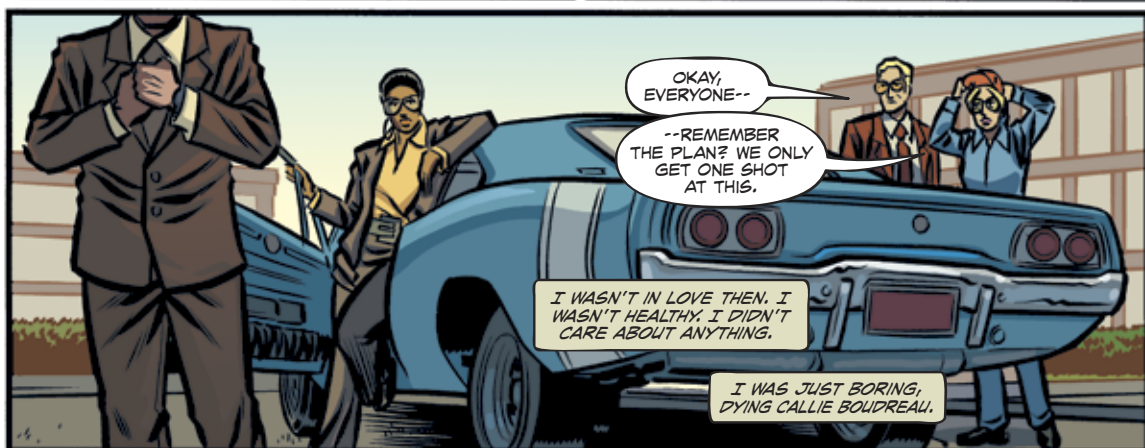
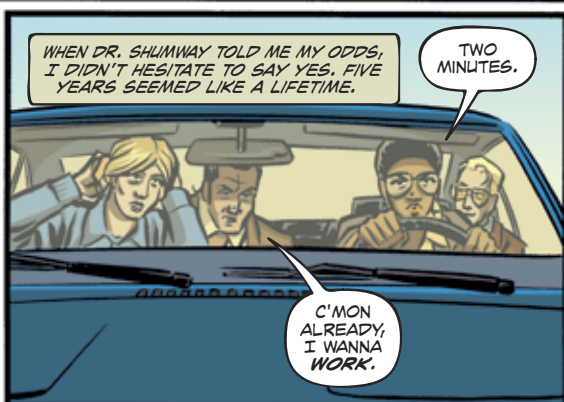
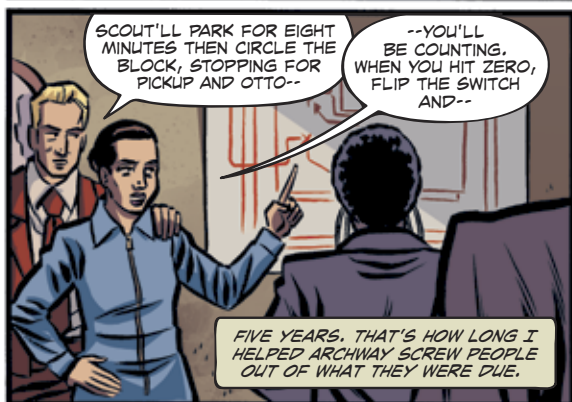
HELL, I STILL HAVE A KEY TO HER PLACE.

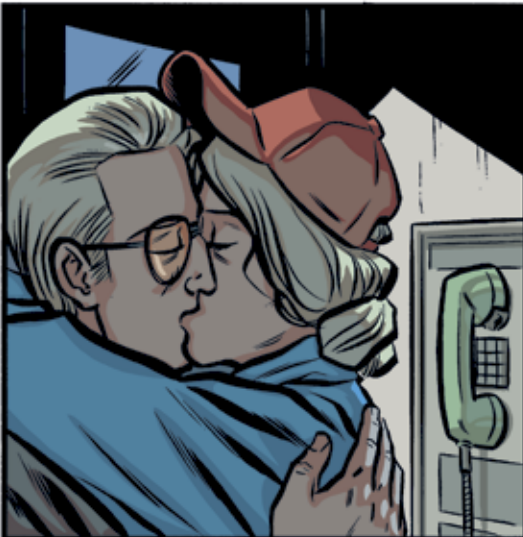
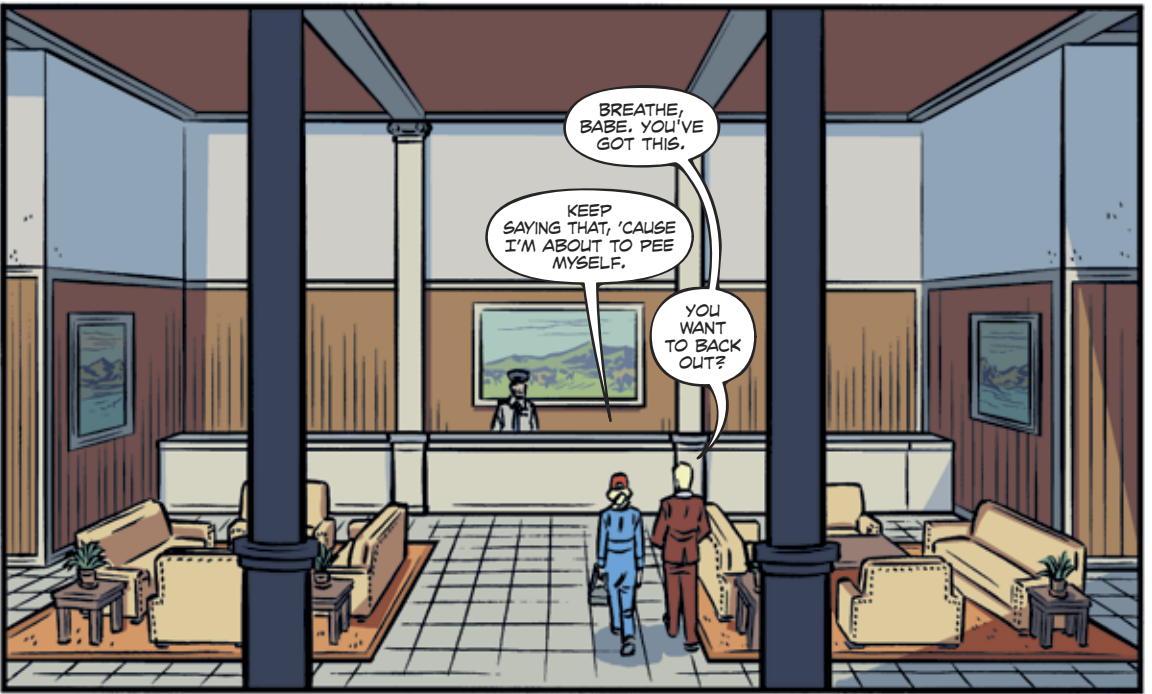


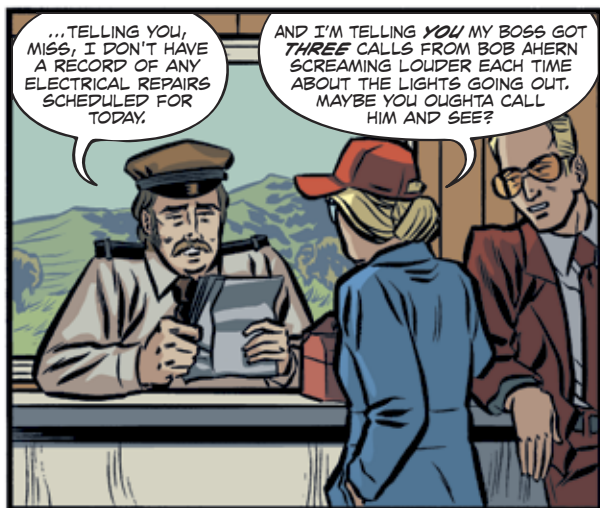
CALM DOWN, SIR. WALK US THROUGH WHAT HAPPENED.

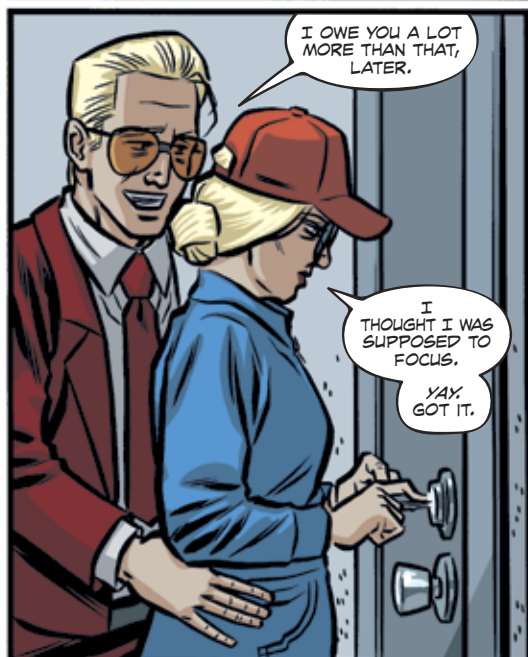
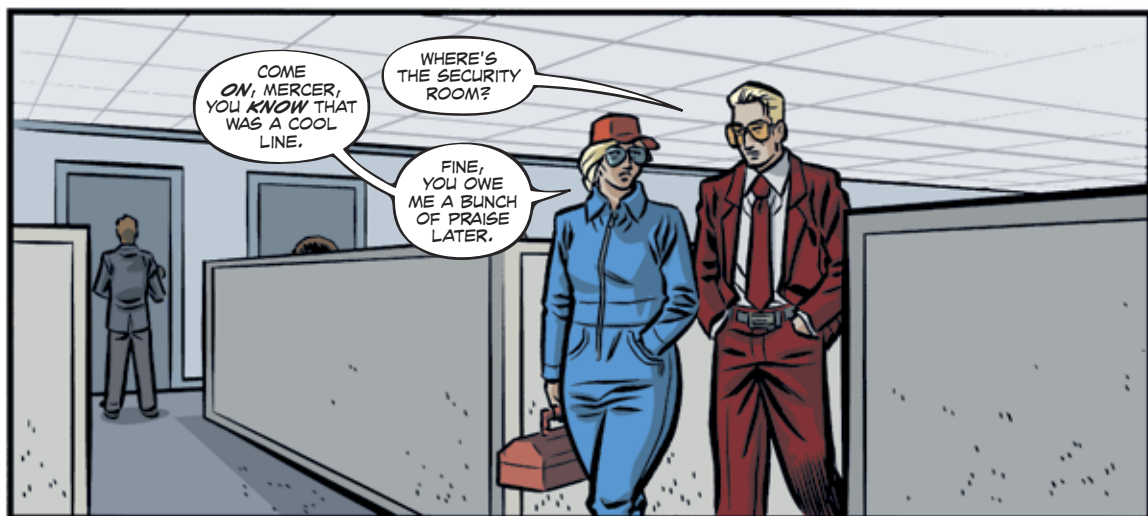
YOU BET YOUR ASS. WHERE DO I START?

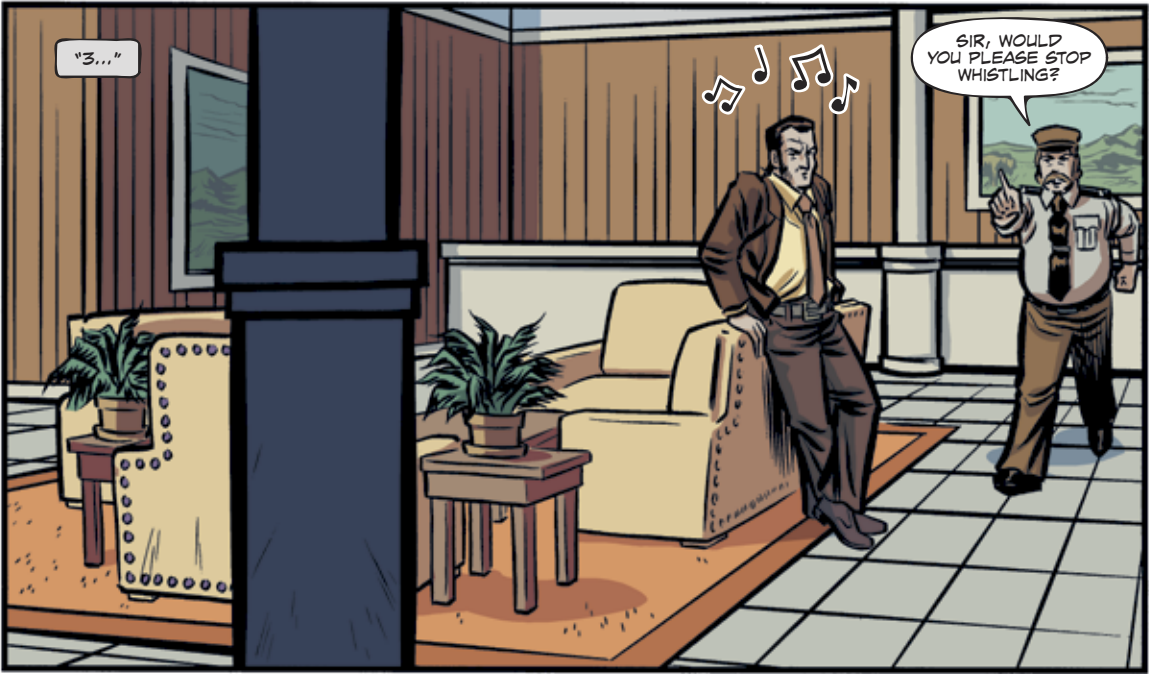
CALLIE BOUDREAU













"THE CHAIN" IS THE ONLY SONG ON THE ALBUM FLEETWOOD MAC WROTE TOGETHER.

FEELS LIKE A SIGN. EVERYONE WORKING IN SYNC TO MAKE THAT ONE THING HAPPEN.

I HUM IT LOUD, TRYING TO HEAR IT OVER THE TORCH, THE ALARMS BLARING ALL AROUND ME.



ALARMS MEAN OTTO'S DOING HIS JOB, PROFESSIONAL ASSHOLE. BUT ONE WHO CAN FIGHT.



LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO TAKE WHAT ARCHWAY OWES.

TWO MINUTES.



AND THEN SOME. SO MUCH MONEY I CAN'T COUNT IT.

ENOUGH FOR A FEW HEART TRANSPLANTS.



OR SOME JUSTICE.

ENOUGH TO MAKE SURE I SLEEP SOUNDLY AT NIGHT.

KEEP TRYING, PIGS. I GOT ALL DAY.

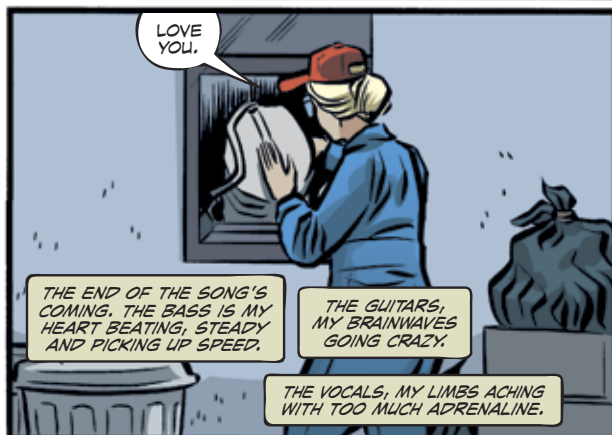
KRASH



"FOUR MINUTES."

"SO HELPFUL, HONEY."

"SORRY,"

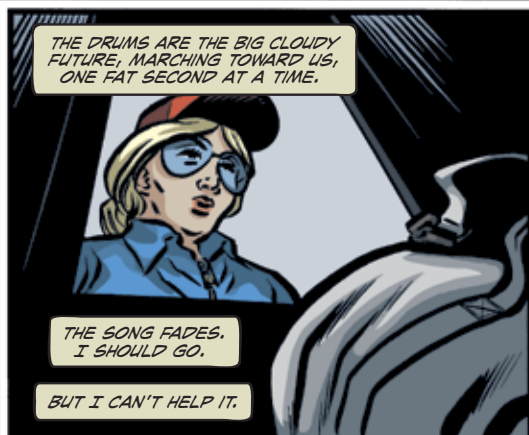


LOVE
YOU.

THE END OF THE SONG'S
COMING. THE BASS IS MY
HEART BEATING, STEADY
AND PICKING UP SPEED.

THE GUITARS,
MY BRAINWAVES
GOING CRAZY.

THE VOCALS, MY LIMBS ACHING
WITH TOO MUCH ADRENALINE.



THE DRUMS ARE THE BIG CLOUDY
FUTURE, MARCHING TOWARD US,
ONE FAT SECOND AT A TIME.

THE SONG FADES.
I SHOULD GO.

BUT I CAN'T HELP IT.

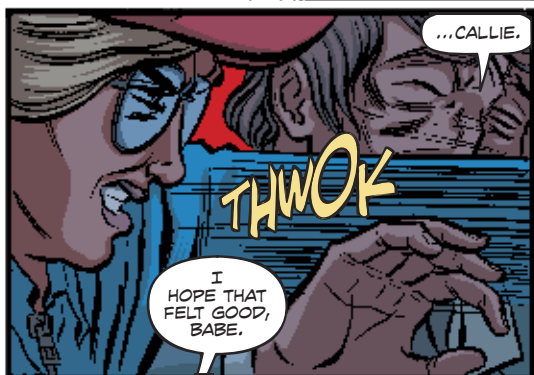


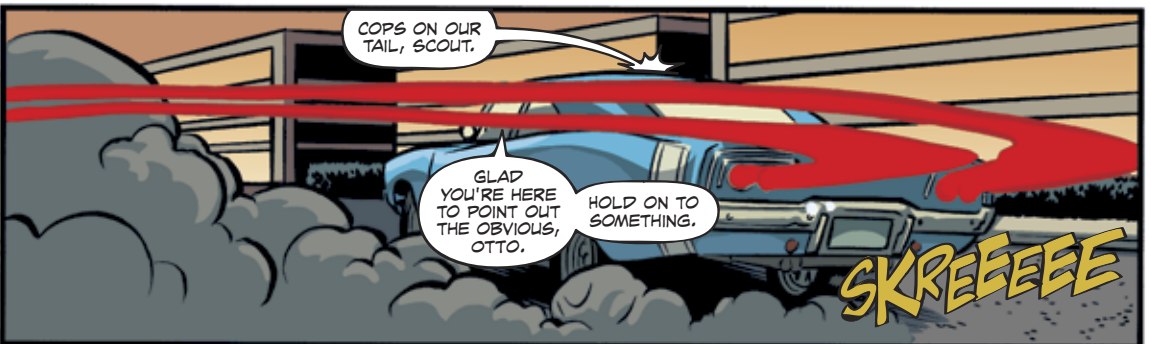
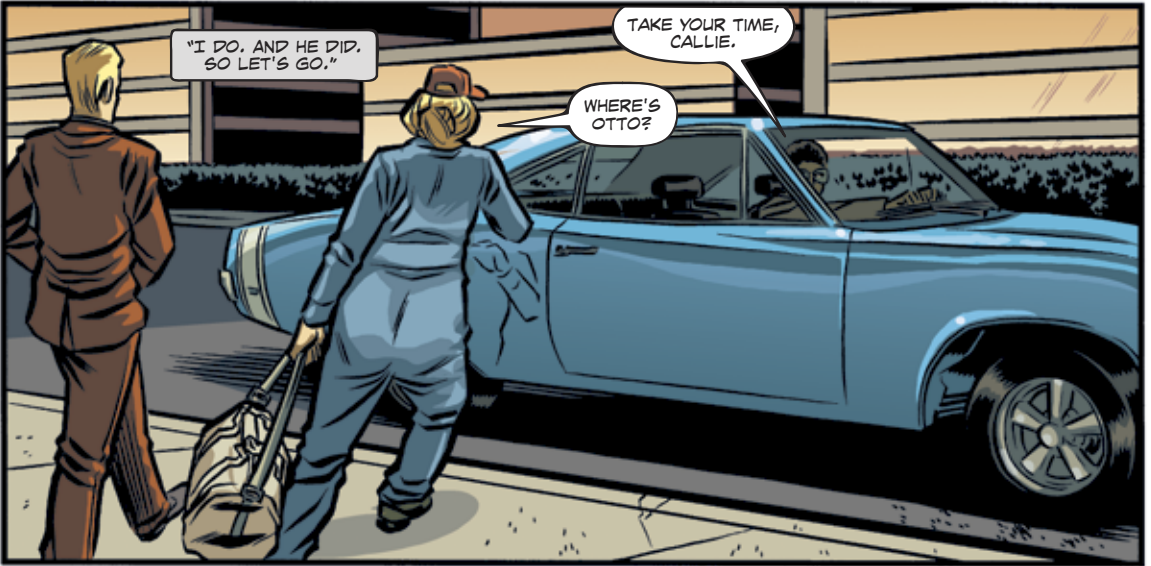
IF MERCER SAYS THE TIME
AGAIN, I DON'T HEAR HIM.

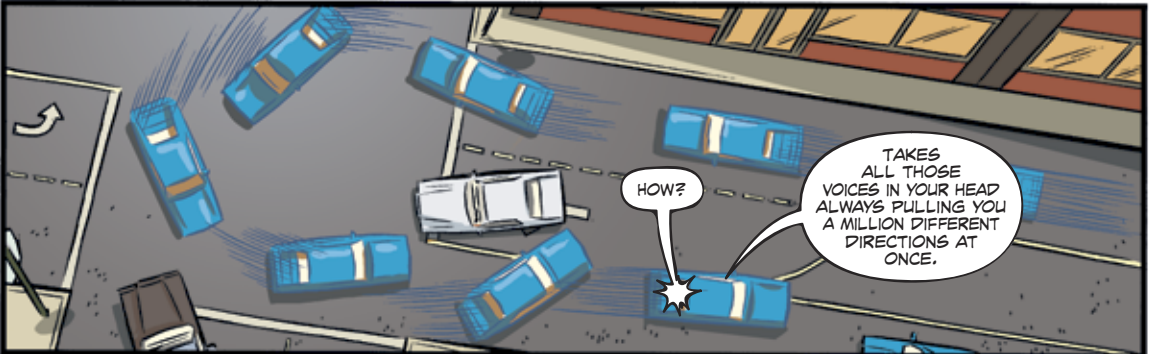
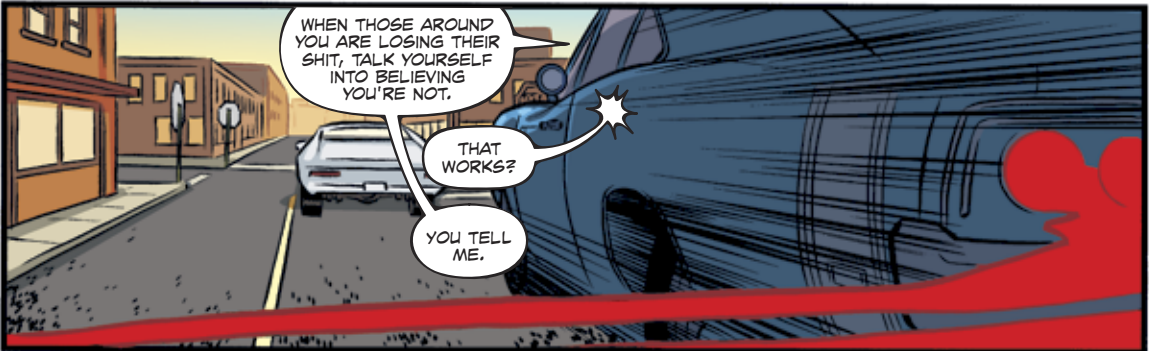
I'VE LIFTED THE NEEDLE;
STARTED THE SONG OVER.

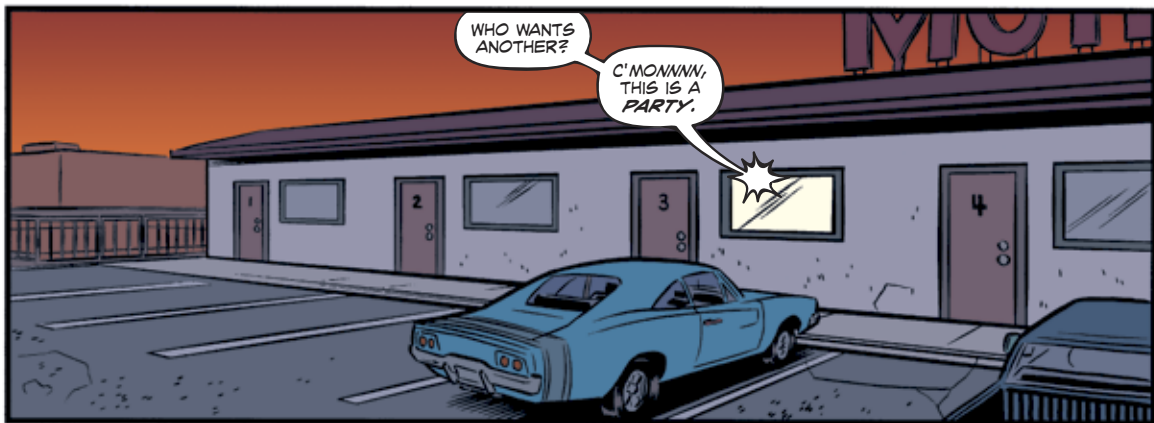
I'M FORTY SECONDS FROM GETTING
AWAY WITH MY BIGGEST CRIME YET.

BUT MAYBE I CAN FIT
ANOTHER IN BEFORE I GO.



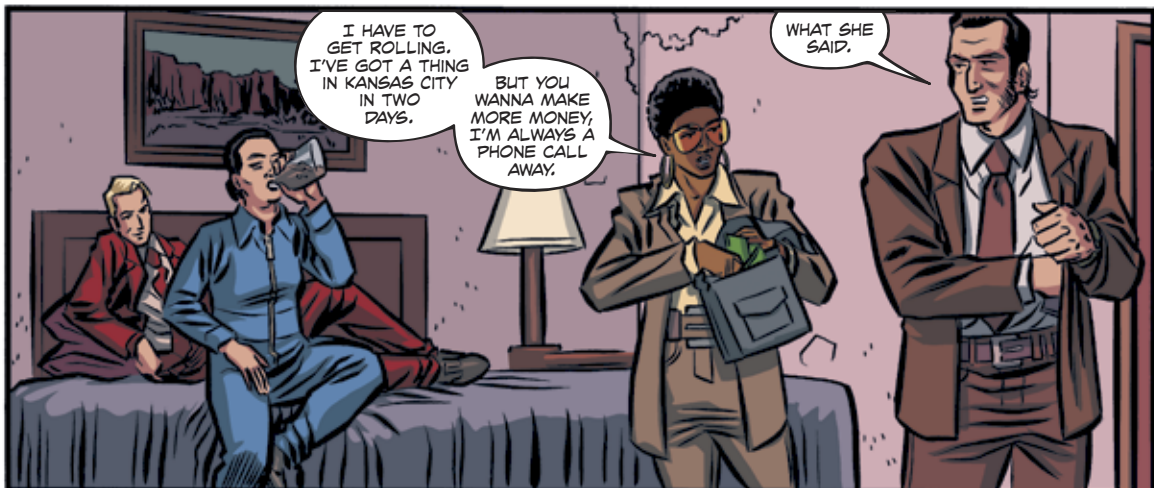






WHO WANTS ANOTHER?

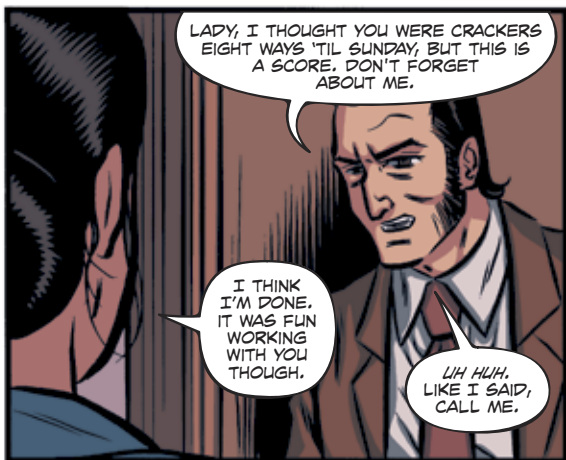
C'MONNNNN, THIS IS A PARTY.



I HAVE TO GET ROLLING. I'VE GOT A THING IN KANSAS CITY IN TWO DAYS.

BUT YOU WANNA MAKE MORE MONEY, I'M ALWAYS A PHONE CALL AWAY.

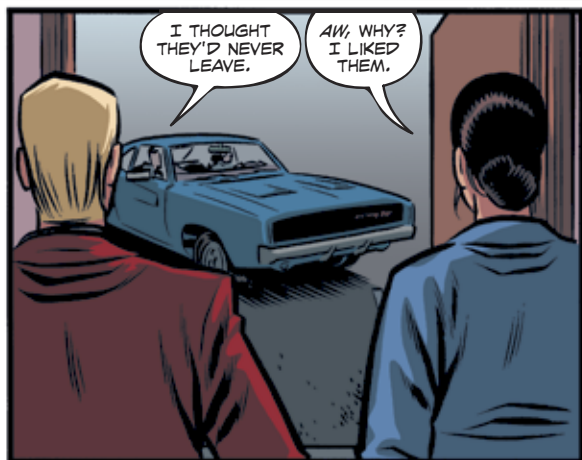
WHAT SHE SAID.



LADY, I THOUGHT YOU WERE CRACKERS EIGHT WAYS 'TIL SUNDAY, BUT THIS IS A SCORE. DON'T FORGET ABOUT ME.

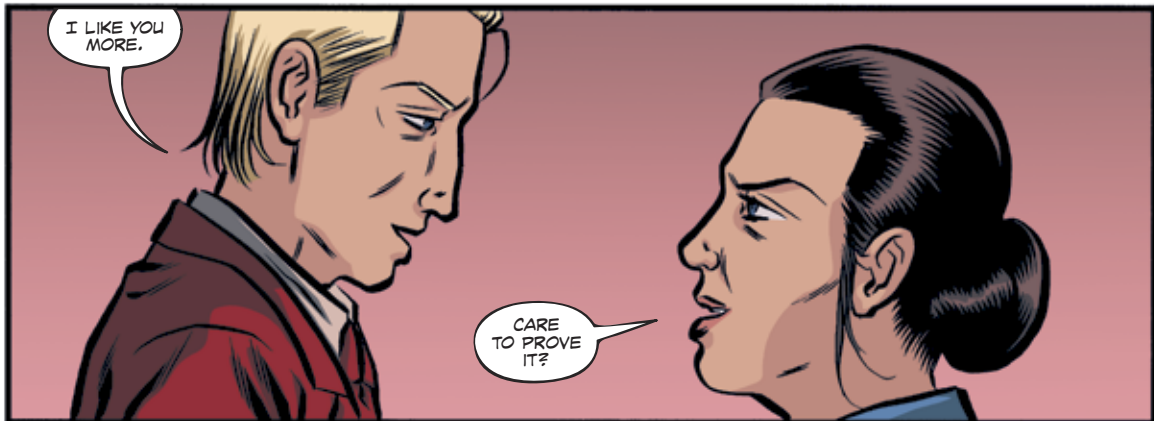
I THINK I'M DONE. IT WAS FUN WORKING WITH YOU THOUGH.

UH HUH. LIKE I SAID, CALL ME.



I THOUGHT THEY'D NEVER LEAVE.

AW, WHY? I LIKED THEM.



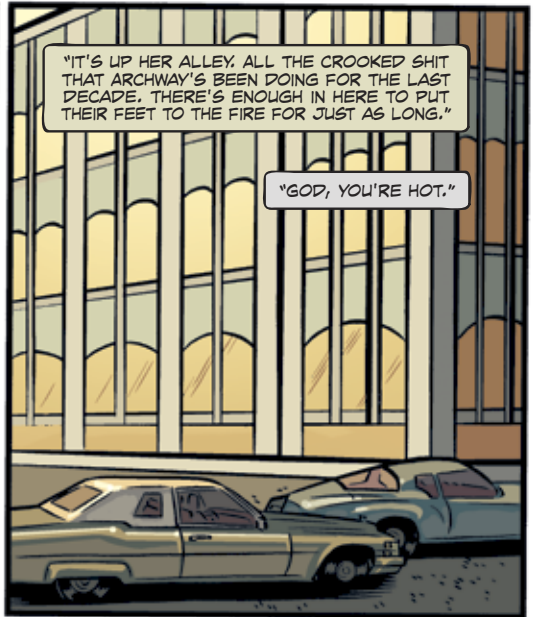
I LIKE YOU MORE.

CARE TO PROVE IT?



I COPIED OVER THE NAMES, ADDRESSES, AND AMOUNTS DOWN, THOSE ARE OUR BENEFICIARIES.

THE FILES ARE A GIFT FOR SOMEONE ELSE.



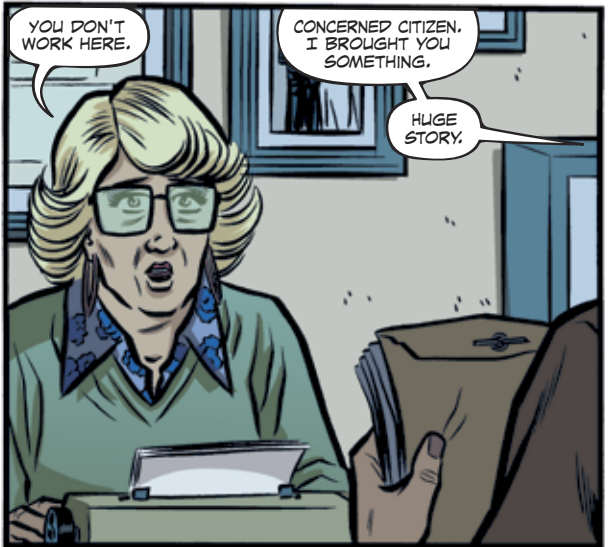
"IT'S UP HER ALLEY. ALL THE CROOKED SHIT THAT ARCHWAY'S BEEN DOING FOR THE LAST DECADE. THERE'S ENOUGH IN HERE TO PUT THEIR FEET TO THE FIRE FOR JUST AS LONG."

"GOD, YOU'RE HOT."



PUT THEM ANYWHERE, I'LL GET TO IT.

NOT AT THIS RATE.



YOU DON'T WORK HERE.

CONCERNED CITIZEN. I BROUGHT YOU SOMETHING.

HUGE STORY.



I DON'T... THESE ARE INSURANCE FILES.

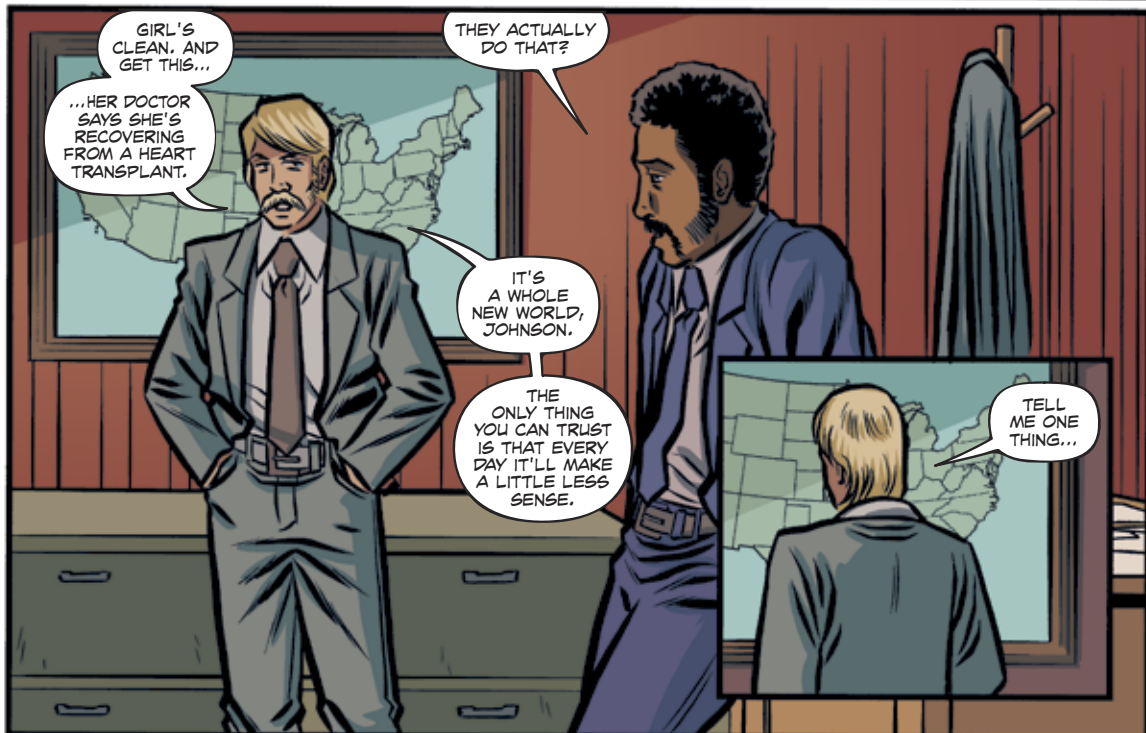
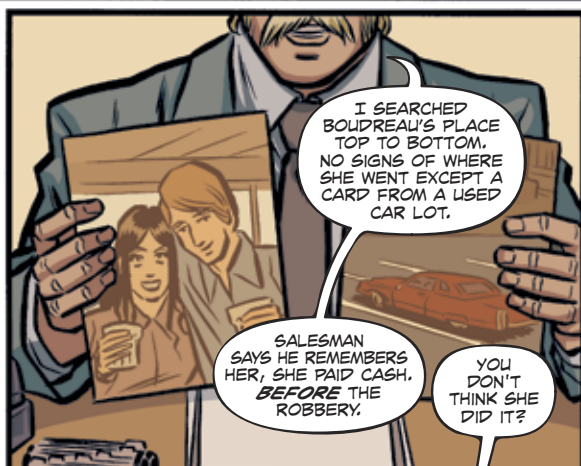
READ THEM CLOSE. YOU'RE SMART. YOU'LL SEE IT.



HOLY...

STOP! HOW WILL I CONTACT YOU?

YOU WON'T.



"...WHERE'S THE MONEY BEING MAILED FROM?"

LAST ONE!

THANK CHRIST, YOU'RE GIVING AWAY EVERYTHING WE MADE.

NOT EVERYTHING, SWEETIE. WE CAN STAY HERE FOR ANOTHER YEAR AND NOT WORRY.

THEN WHAT? SETTLE DOWN, GET CAREERS?

WHO'S WE? YOU'RE SET FOR LIFE.

YOU GOT YOURSELF A SUGAR MAMA TO TAKE CARE OF YOU.

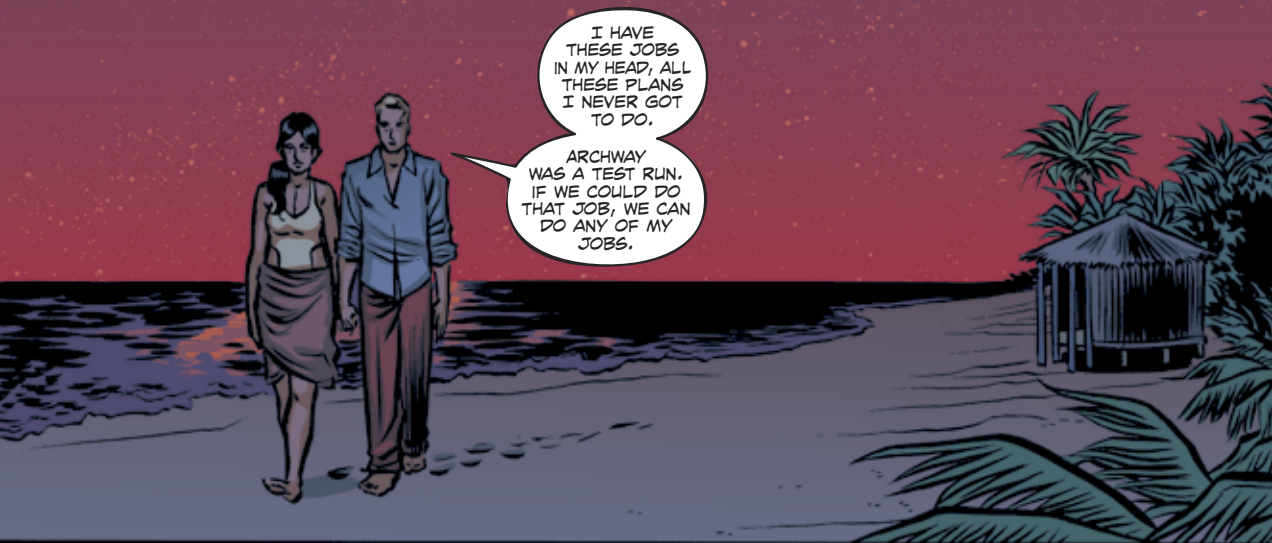
MY PLAN REMAINS SLEEPING 'TIL NOON EVERY DAY; GET UP AND HAVE CRAZY SEX, SWIM, EAT FRESH SEAFOOD, MINGLE WITH THE TOURISTS.

THEN WE GO SOMEWHERE ELSE WHEN WE GET BORED.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?

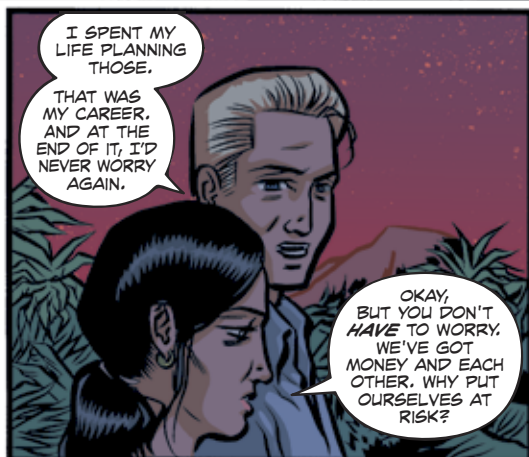
I WANT TO DO ANOTHER ONE.

DON'T YOU?



I HAVE THESE JOBS IN MY HEAD, ALL THESE PLANS I NEVER GOT TO DO.

ARCHWAY WAS A TEST RUN. IF WE COULD DO THAT JOB, WE CAN DO ANY OF MY JOBS.



I SPENT MY LIFE PLANNING THOSE.

THAT WAS MY CAREER. AND AT THE END OF IT, I'D NEVER WORRY AGAIN.

OKAY, BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY. WE'VE GOT MONEY AND EACH OTHER. WHY PUT OURSELVES AT RISK?



BECAUSE THE MONEY'S GOING TO RUN OUT. IT ALWAYS DOES. BECAUSE IT'S FUN.

ADMIT IT, YOU'VE BEEN HAVING THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE.

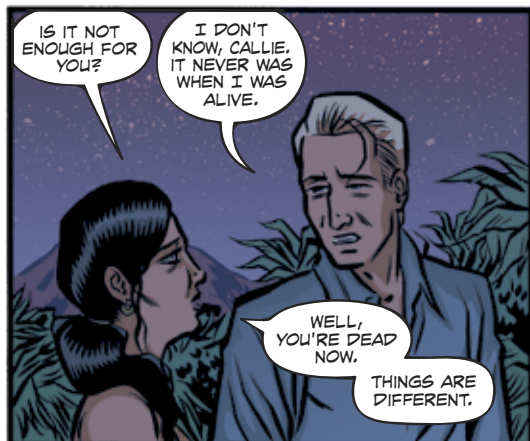
NOT A BIG ACCOMPLISHMENT, MERCER. MY LIFE UP UNTIL A FEW MONTHS AGO WAS A PARADE OF SICK AND SAD.



I DON'T NEED A LAVISH LIFE. I HAVE YOU.

RIGHT.

THAT'S ENOUGH?

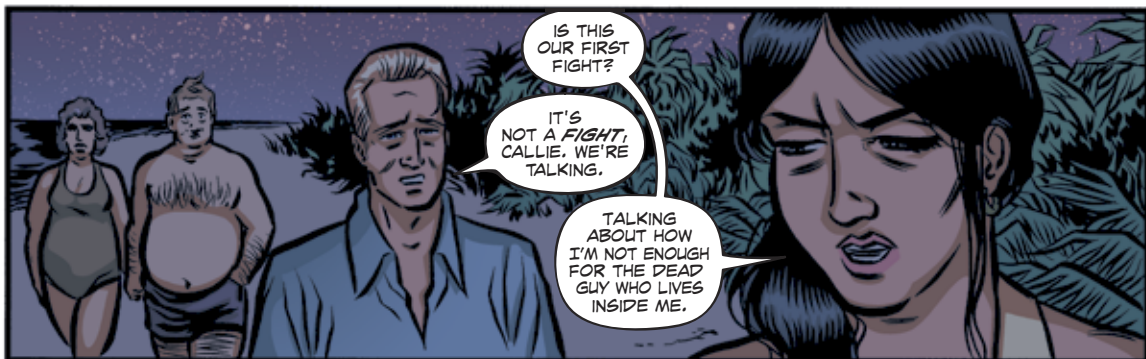


IS IT NOT ENOUGH FOR YOU?

I DON'T KNOW, CALLIE. IT NEVER WAS WHEN I WAS ALIVE.

WELL, YOU'RE DEAD NOW.

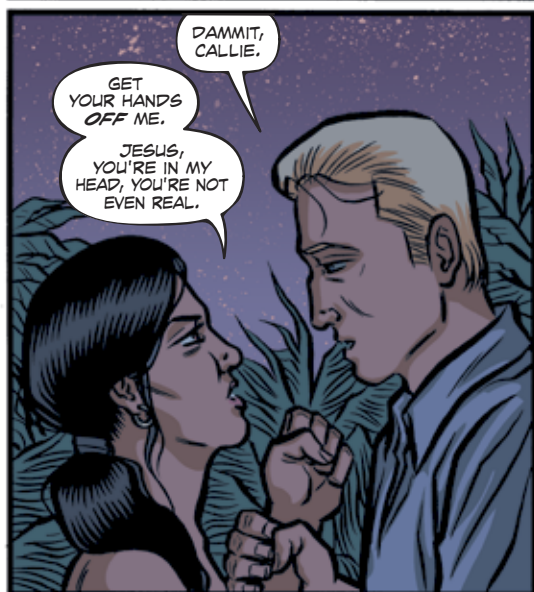
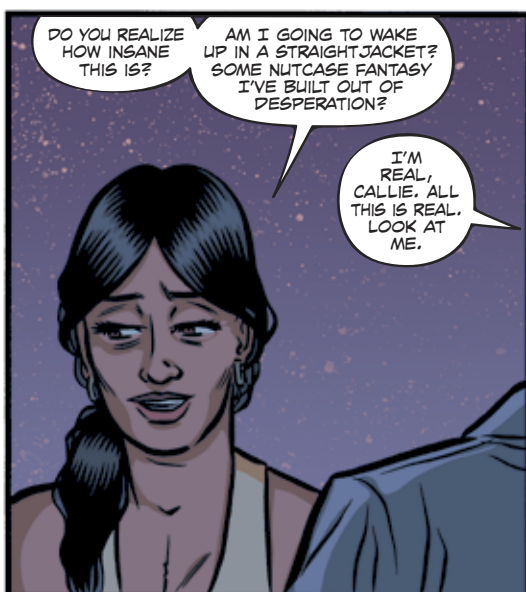
THINGS ARE DIFFERENT.



IS THIS OUR FIRST FIGHT?

IT'S NOT A FIGHT, CALLIE. WE'RE TALKING.

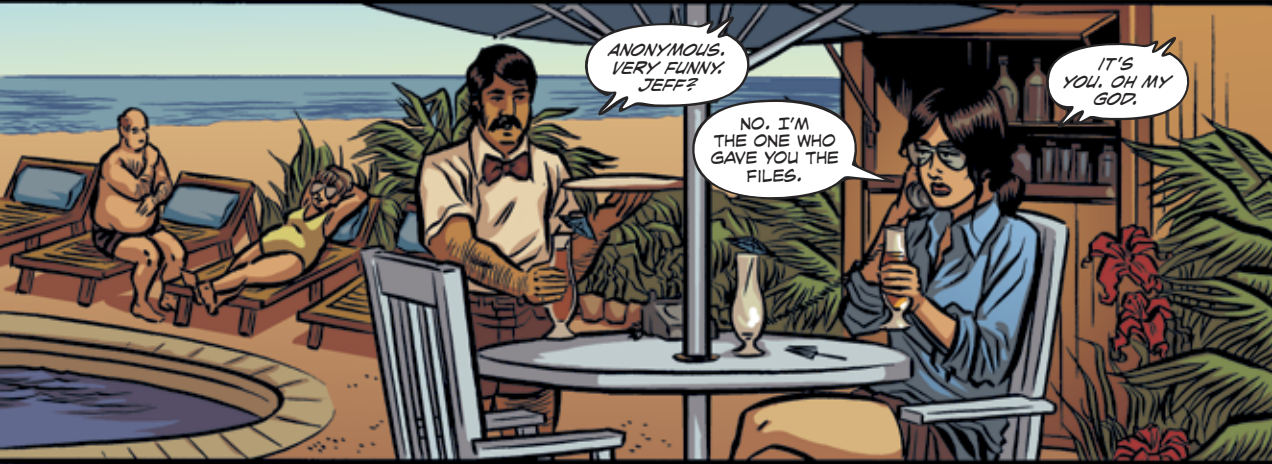
TALKING ABOUT HOW I'M NOT ENOUGH FOR THE DEAD GUY WHO LIVES INSIDE ME.





"...A COLLECT CALL TO THE UNITED STATES, CALIFORNIA. JOAN SHOCKLING AT THE SACRAMENTO GAZETTE.

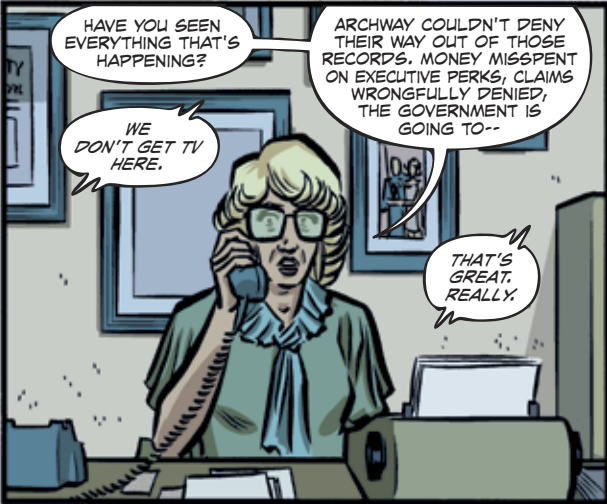
"TELL HER IT'S ANNA NYMUS."



ANONYMOUS. VERY FUNNY. JEFF?

NO. I'M THE ONE WHO GAVE YOU THE FILES.

IT'S YOU. OH MY GOD.



HAVE YOU SEEN EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENING?

WE DON'T GET TV HERE.

ARCHWAY COULDN'T DENY THEIR WAY OUT OF THOSE RECORDS. MONEY MISSPENT ON EXECUTIVE PERKS, CLAIMS WRONGFULLY DENIED, THE GOVERNMENT IS GOING TO--

THAT'S GREAT. REALLY.



I'M CALLING FOR SOMETHING ELSE.

I NEED A FAVOR. I NEED YOU TO FIND SOMEONE.



HE DIED IN FEBRUARY.

OKAY, WHO IS IT?







THANK YOU.

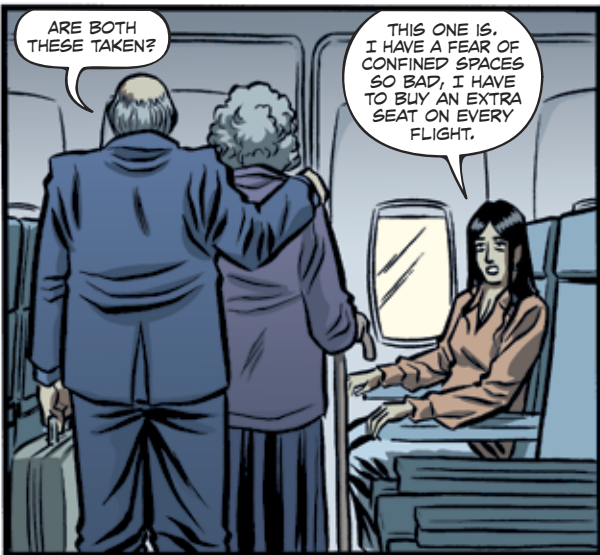
HAVE A NICE FLIGHT, MISSUS.

DEPARTURES



DID YOU HEAR? HE CALLED ME MISSUS, LIKE I'M MARRIED.

WE'RE GONNA MISS OUR FLIGHT, CALLIE. C'MON.



ARE BOTH THESE TAKEN?

THIS ONE IS. I HAVE A FEAR OF CONFINED SPACES SO BAD, I HAVE TO BUY AN EXTRA SEAT ON EVERY FLIGHT.



HOW LONG ARE WE DELAYED?

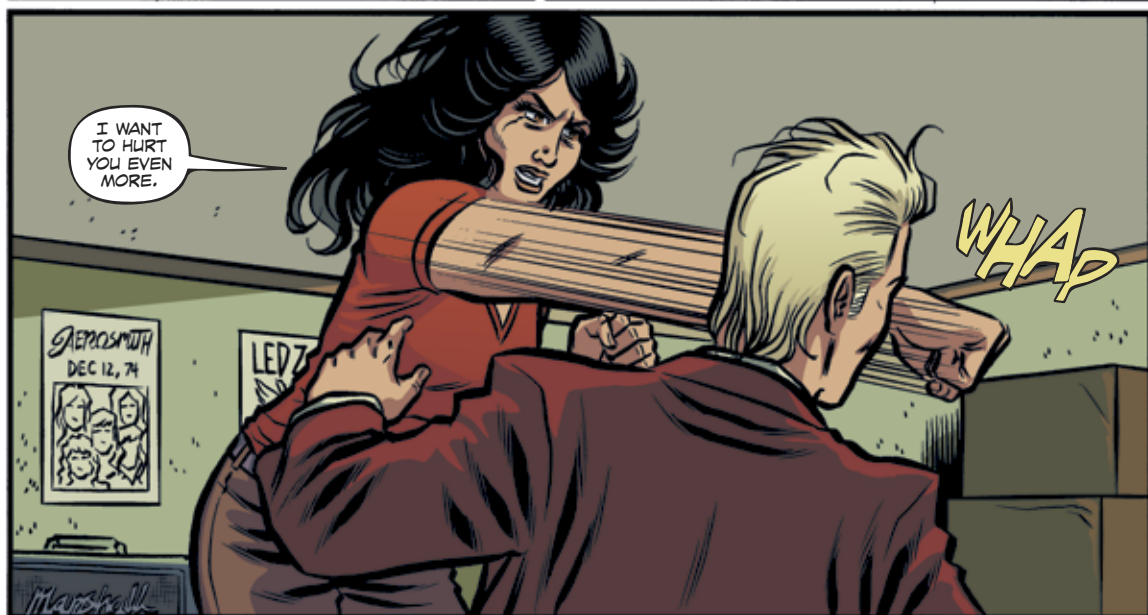
WE'LL GET THERE WHEN WE GET THERE.

WHY SO ANXIOUS?



SEE? WE MADE IT. NEW YORK DIDN'T GO ANYWHERE.

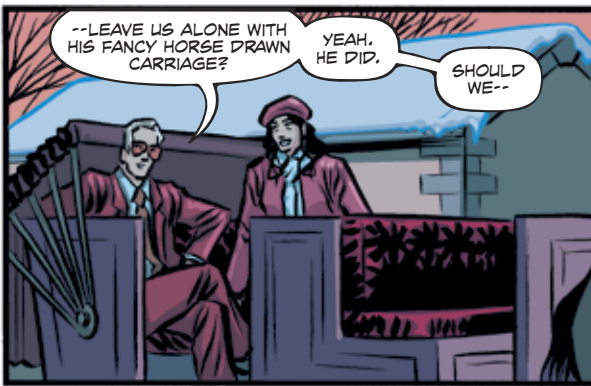
IT'S SAFE AND-- SHIT.



CHAPTER 4









MAYBE IT WAS THE ANNIVERSARY.

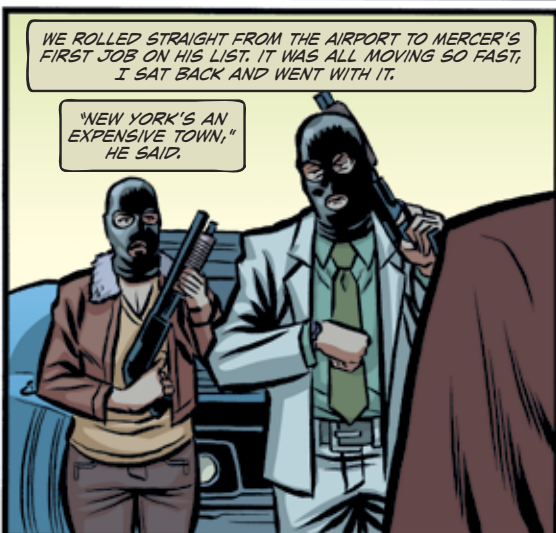
ME AND MERCER.
ME AND MY HEART.

A YEAR TO THE DAY I
STOLE MY LIFE BACK.



WHEN WE LANDED, I WAS WIDE AWAKE ON NO SLEEP,
RACING ON MY FIRST MOMENTS IN NEW YORK CITY.

I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE A
CHANCE TO ASK WHY SCOUT
AND OTTO WERE THERE.



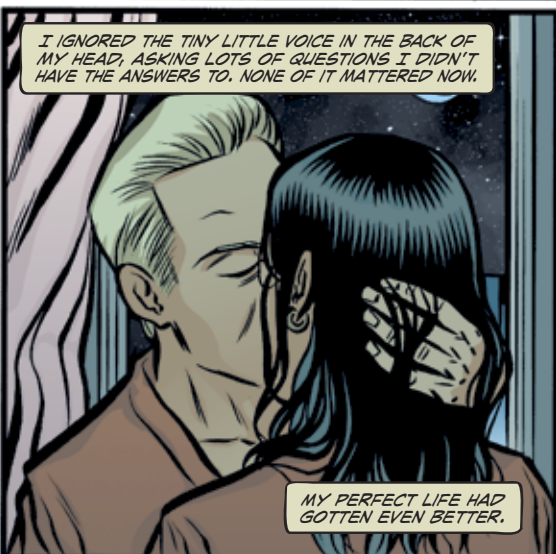
WE ROLLED STRAIGHT FROM THE AIRPORT TO MERCER'S
FIRST JOB ON HIS LIST. IT WAS ALL MOVING SO FAST,
I SAT BACK AND WENT WITH IT.

"NEW YORK'S AN
EXPENSIVE TOWN,"
HE SAID.



ONCE MY HEAD STOPPED SPINNING WE WERE
CHECKED INTO A DREAM LIFE, ME AND
MERCER LIVING IN THE HONEYMOON SUITE.

NEVER LEAVING
EXCEPT TO PUT
THE ROOM SERVICE
TRAYS IN THE HALL.



I IGNORED THE TINY LITTLE VOICE IN THE BACK OF
MY HEAD, ASKING LOTS OF QUESTIONS I DIDN'T
HAVE THE ANSWERS TO. NONE OF IT MATTERED NOW.

MY PERFECT LIFE HAD
GOTTEN EVEN BETTER.



MERCER HAD A ROLODEX OF HEISTS IN HIS HEAD, PLANNED DOWN TO THE SMALLEST DETAIL.

I HAD AN ITCH I COULDN'T SCRATCH. FOR HIM. FOR THE JOBS. THE THRILLS EACH ONE BROUGHT WITH THEM.

WE WENT WELL TOGETHER.



I EVEN SUGGESTED JOBS.

ONE WEEK WE STOLE PRICELESS ART, THE NEXT WE'D ROB A ROOM FULL OF COKE-OUT STOCKBROKERS OF THEIR BONUSES FROM SCREWING PEOPLE OVER.

YOU CAN PROBABLY GUESS WHOSE WAS WHICH.



I DIDN'T KNOW MY FAIRYTALE WOULD HAVE SO MANY SHOTGUNS IN IT, BUT IT WAS MOSTLY LIKE I'D IMAGINED.

TIME MOVED IN A BLUR; WEEKS MELTED AWAY BETWEEN COMPLICATED JOBS AND 800 THREAD COUNT SHEETS.



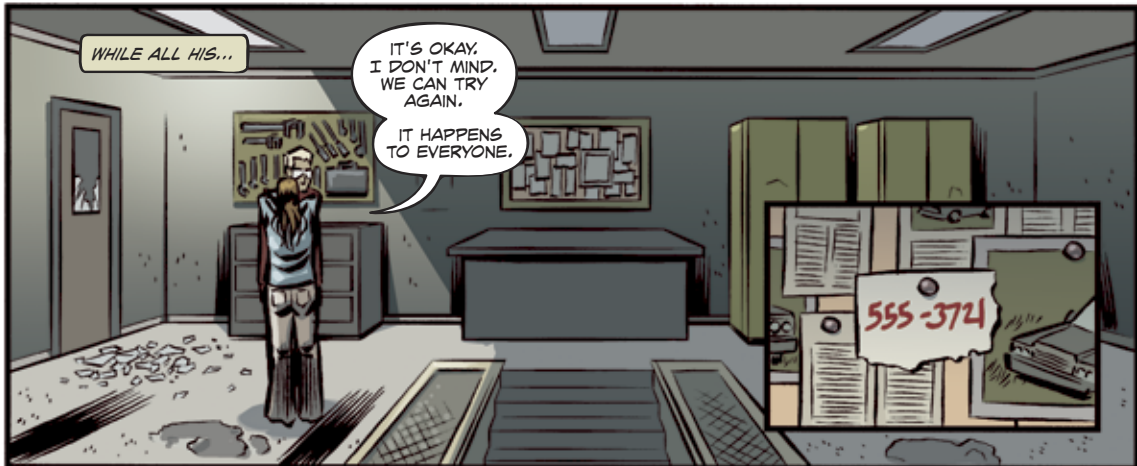
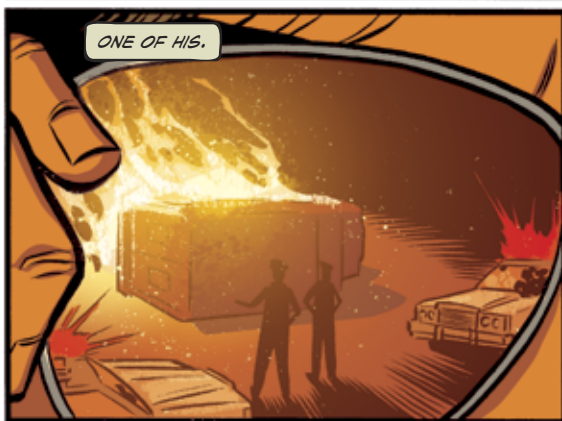
BUT I REMEMBER THAT NIGHT. OUR ANNIVERSARY.

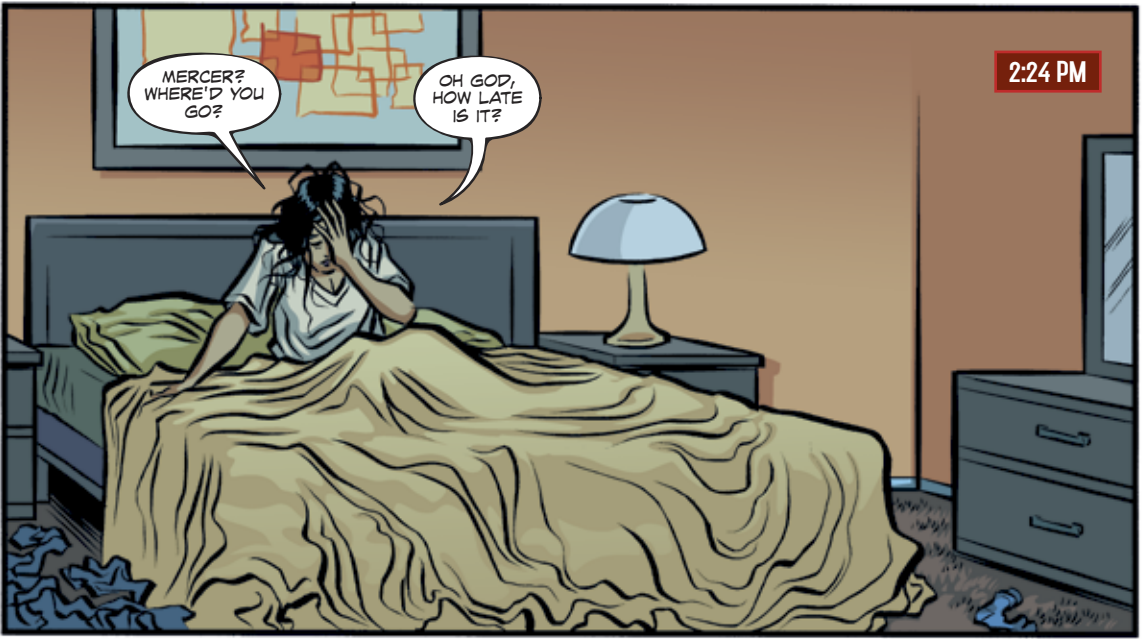
WE WALKED THE ISLAND. A MOVIE IN CHELSEA, DINNER IN MURRAY HILL, A ROMANTIC CARRIAGE RIDE THROUGH CENTRAL PARK.

I REMEMBER EACH SECOND.

BECAUSE, LOOKING BACK, THAT WAS THE LAST PERFECT MOMENT I CAN REMEMBER.







MERCER?
WHERE'D YOU
GO?

OH GOD,
HOW LATE
IS IT?

2:24 PM



YOU
AWAKE IN
THERE?

'CAUSE
I'M GONNA GET
BREAKFA--LUNCH.
FOOD.



MISS PARKER,
HOW ARE YOU
TODAY?

CAN'T
TALK. NEED
COFFEE.



YOU COMING
OUT?

OR ARE
YOU GONNA
SULK ALL
DAY?

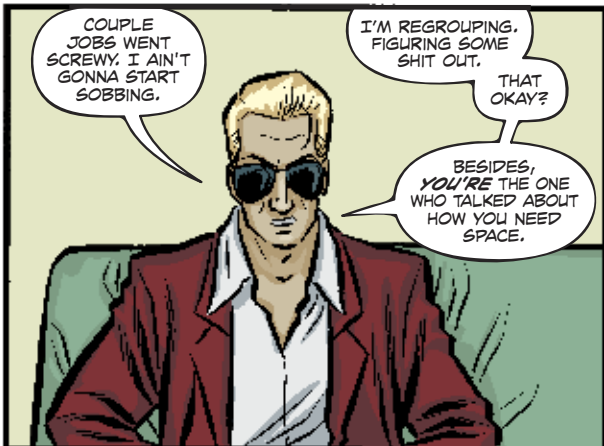
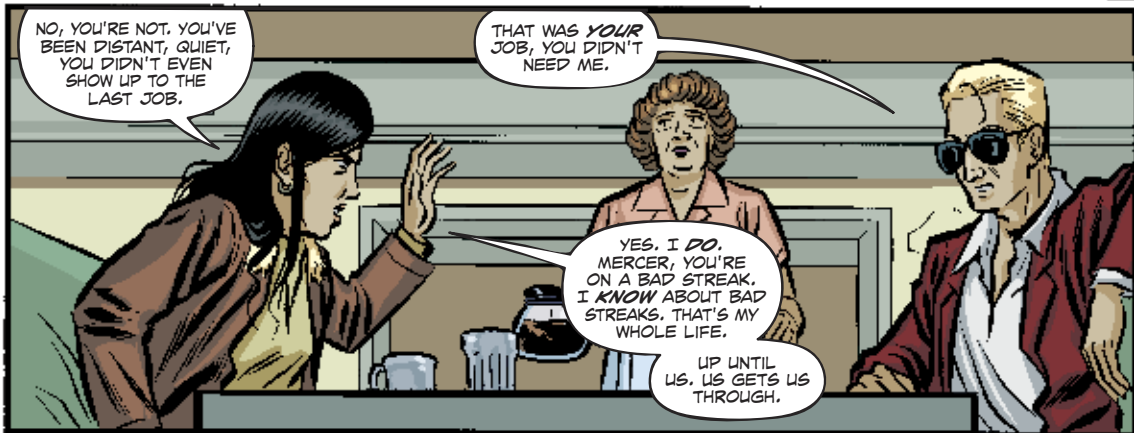
WHAT
DID I
DO?



IT'S JUST A ROUGH PATCH,
I TOLD MYSELF.

HE'LL GET OVER
IT, I THOUGHT.

AND THAT
LITTLE VOICE
GOT LOUDER,
PANICKING.
WHAT IF HE
DIDN'T?





I MOVE. ANYWHERE. NOWHERE.
I'M SO TIRED ALL THE TIME.

MAYBE IT'S MY MEDS. I TRY
TO REMEMBER EVERYTHING
SHUMWAY SAID ABOUT MY
HEART, ABOUT MY CONDITION.



I HAD IT TATTOOED ON MY BRAIN AT FIRST.
EVERY WARNING SIGN, BUT I HAVEN'T
THOUGHT ABOUT IT IN ALMOST A YEAR.

IS THAT WHY HE'S DISTANT?
IS MY HEART GIVING OUT?



I SLEEP EIGHT HOURS A NIGHT
AND I'M STILL EXHAUSTED.
MERCER DRIVING ME AROUND AT
NIGHT WHILE I SLEEP, SCOUTING
OUT JOBS, BUILDING OUR FUTURE.

LATELY IT FEELS LIKE HE'S WORKING
OVERTIME, GETTING CARELESS. I
WAKE UP TO A MAP OF BRUISES, MY
CLOTHES SMELLING OF CIGAR SMOKE.

WHILE HE CRAWLS BACK INTO
HIS CAVE IN MY HEAD AND
PULLS A ROCK IN FRONT OF IT.



TWO MONTHS AGO, I FELT
AMAZING. WE WERE HERE
AND IN LOVE AND PERFECT.
RICH, BUT NOT TOO RICH.
HAPPIER THAN MOST.



SO IT MAKES SENSE THAT THIS
IS THE PART OF THE FAIRYTALE
WHERE THE BIG BAD WOLF
SHOWS UP TO GET HIS CUT.

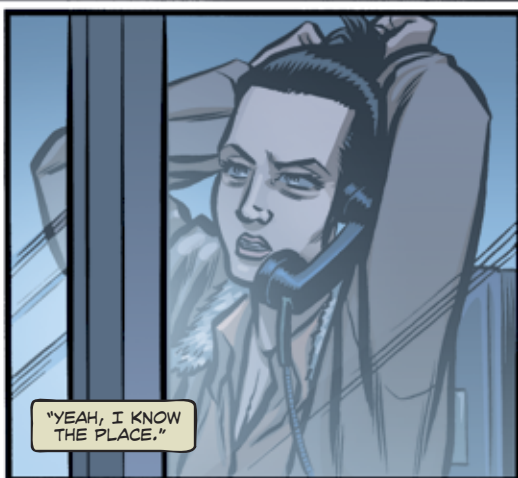


"HEY, IT'S ME.

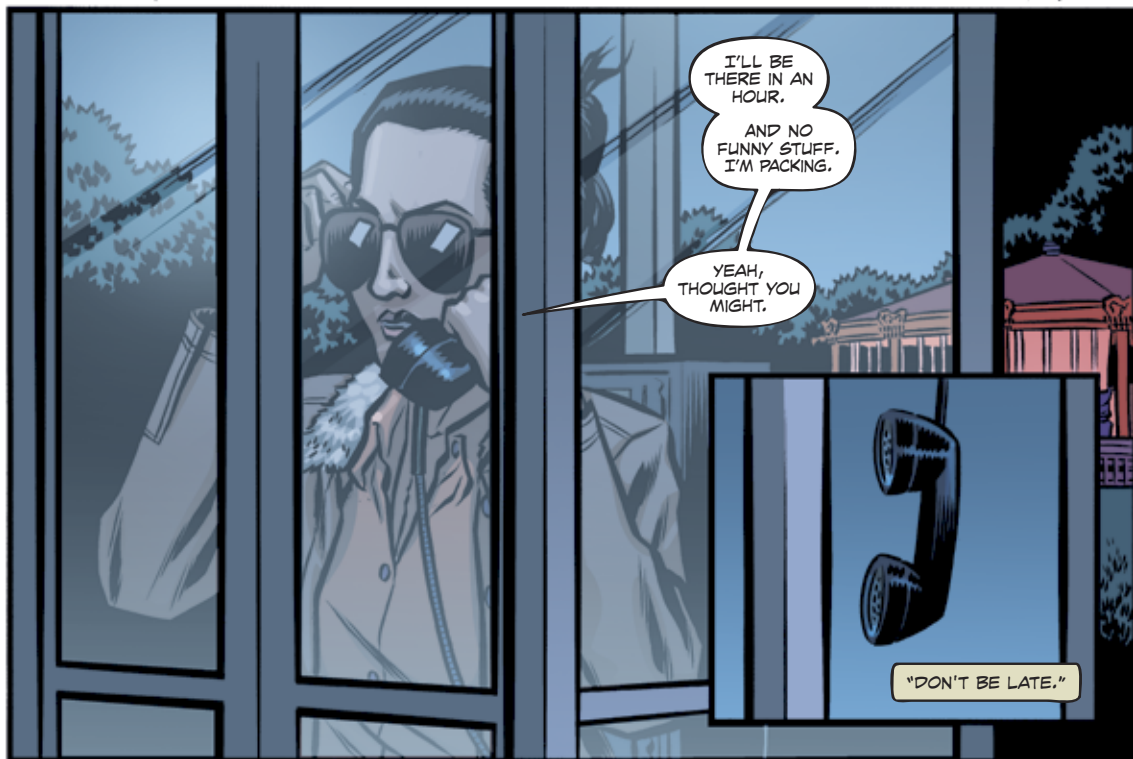
"THE ONE YOU'VE
BEEN LOOKING FOR.



"UH HUH. WELL, MAYBE
INSTEAD OF THIS CAT AND
MOUSE GAME WE'VE BEEN
PLAYING, WE SHOULD
MEET FACE TO FACE.



"YEAH, I KNOW
THE PLACE."

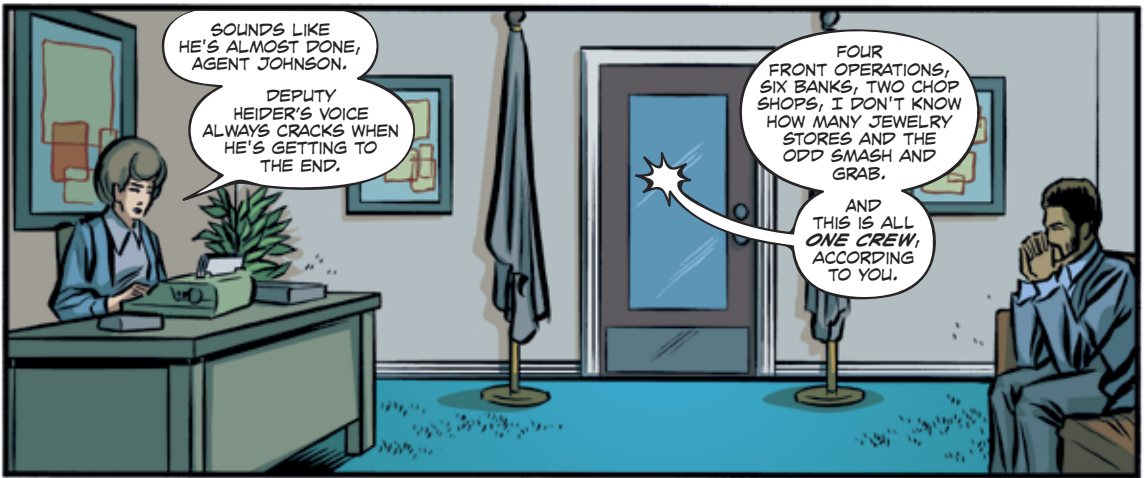


I'LL BE
THERE IN AN
HOUR.

AND NO
FUNNY STUFF.
I'M PACKING.

YEAH,
THOUGHT YOU
MIGHT.

"DON'T BE LATE."

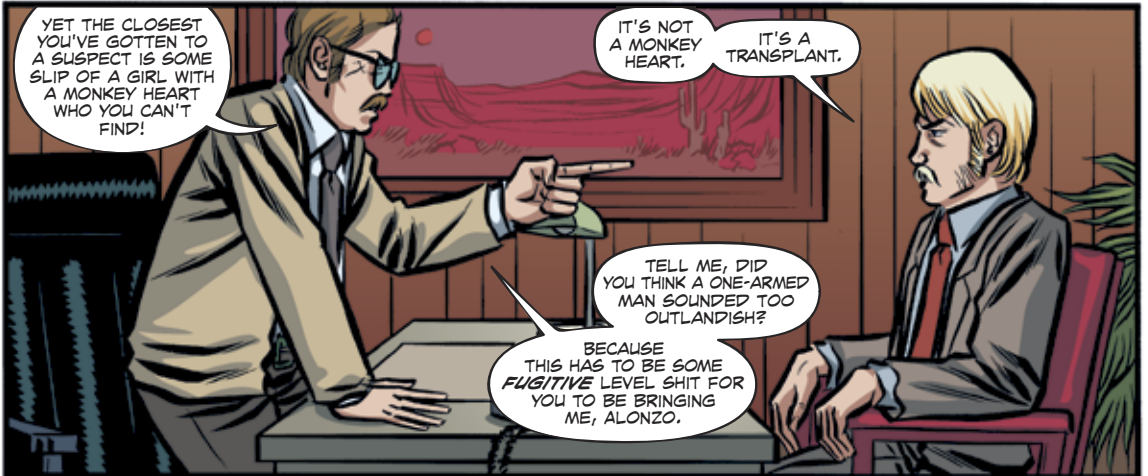


SOUNDS LIKE HE'S ALMOST DONE, AGENT JOHNSON.

DEPUTY HEIDER'S VOICE ALWAYS CRACKS WHEN HE'S GETTING TO THE END.

FOUR FRONT OPERATIONS, SIX BANKS, TWO CHOP SHOPS, I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY JEWELRY STORES AND THE ODD SMASH AND GRAB.

AND THIS IS ALL *ONE CREW*, ACCORDING TO YOU.



YET THE CLOSEST YOU'VE GOTTEN TO A SUSPECT IS SOME SLIP OF A GIRL WITH A MONKEY HEART WHO YOU CAN'T FIND!

IT'S NOT A MONKEY HEART.

IT'S A TRANSPLANT.

TELL ME, DID YOU THINK A ONE-ARMED MAN SOUNDED TOO OUTLANDISH?

BECAUSE THIS HAS TO BE SOME *FUGITIVE LEVEL* SHIT FOR YOU TO BE BRINGING ME, ALONZO.

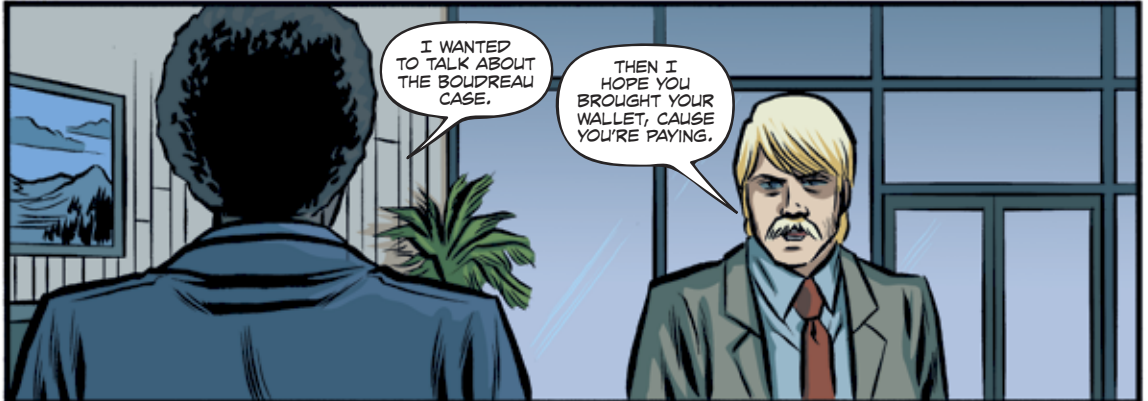


GET ME SOMETHING OR I'LL POST YOU UP IN CASPER GODDAMN WYOMING BECAUSE YOU WILL BE A FUCKING *GHOST*.



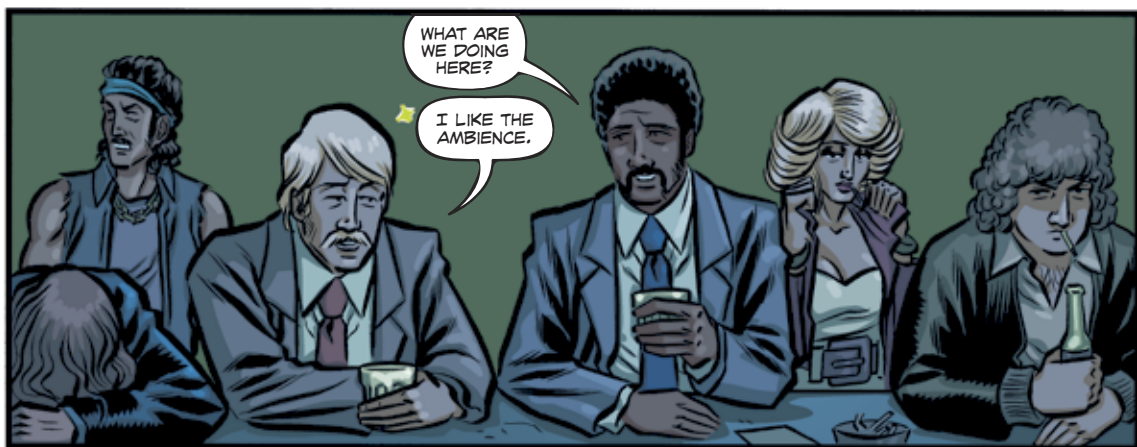
ALONZO!

UNLESS YOU HAVE A MIRACLE TO SHARE WITH ME, I'M GETTING A DRINK.



I WANTED TO TALK ABOUT THE BOUDREAU CASE.

THEN I HOPE YOU BROUGHT YOUR WALLET, CAUSE YOU'RE PAYING.



WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?

I LIKE THE AMBIENCE.

BOUDREAU'S A NOBODY. A STACK OF MEDICAL RECORDS, A SPEEDING TICKET FIVE YEARS AGO BUT SHE BARELY EXISTS.

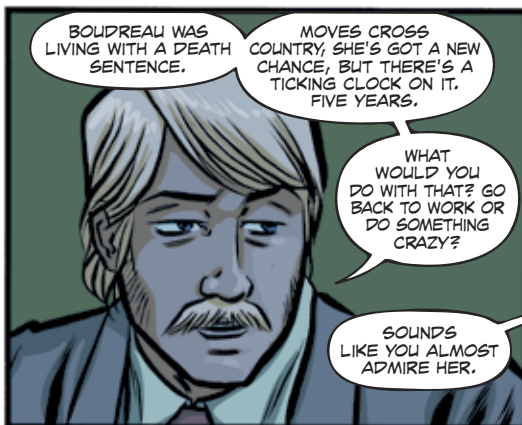
NOW SHE'S LEADING ONE OF THE MORE SUCCESSFUL CREWS I'VE COME ACROSS. WHAT CHANGED?

HER HEART?

RIGHT. SHE GOT THAT AND SHE'S QUITTING HER JOB, ROBBING THE PLACE BLIND AND DISAPPEARING OFF THE MAP.

THAT DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE, ALONZO.

DRINK, KID.



BOUDREAU WAS LIVING WITH A DEATH SENTENCE.

MOVES CROSS COUNTRY, SHE'S GOT A NEW CHANCE, BUT THERE'S A TICKING CLOCK ON IT. FIVE YEARS.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH THAT? GO BACK TO WORK OR DO SOMETHING CRAZY?

SOUNDS LIKE YOU ALMOST ADMIRE HER.



I GOT TEN YEARS TIL PENSION OF DUTIFULLY DEALING WITH SHITBIRDS LIKE HEIDER.

I'D LOVE TO BE FREE TO TAKE IT OUT ON--

BUMP!

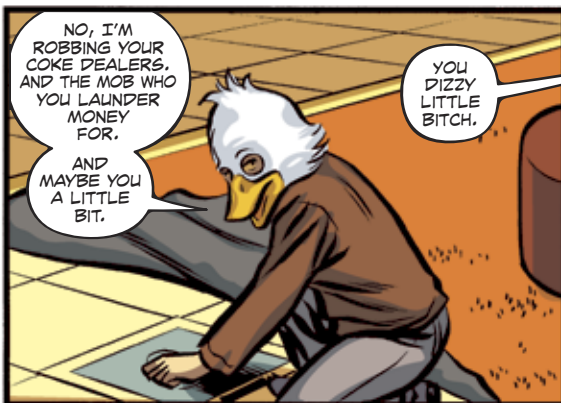
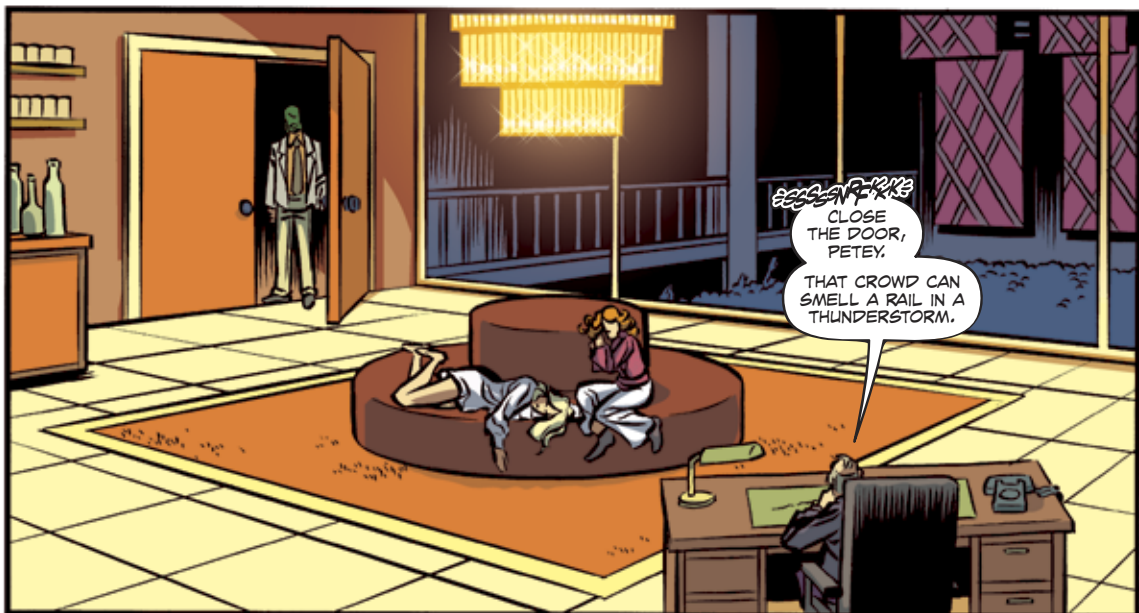


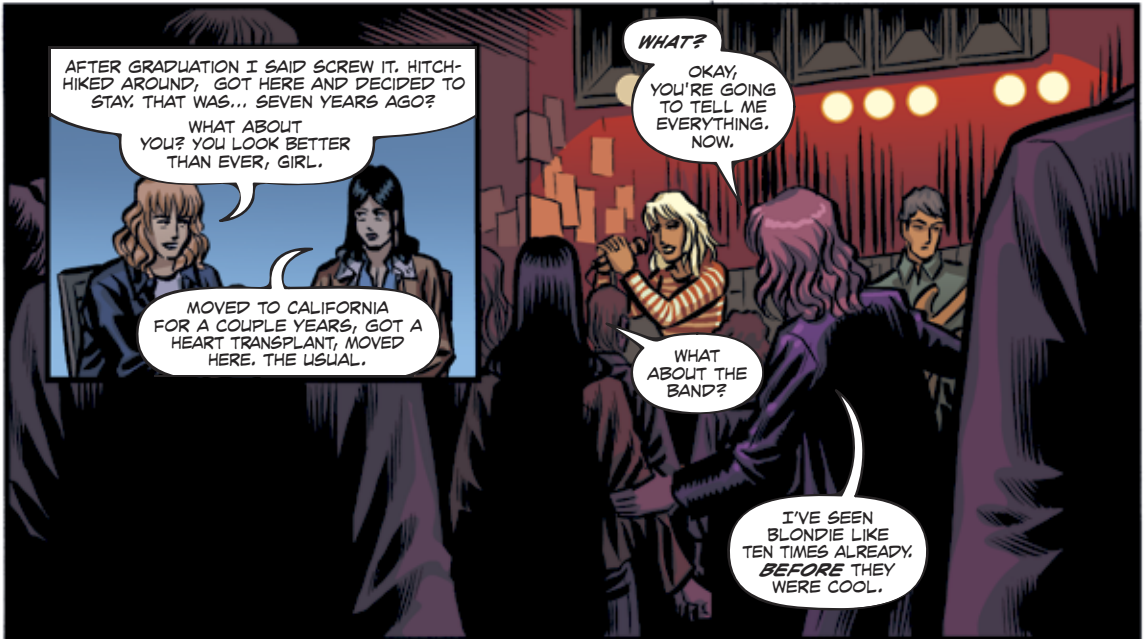
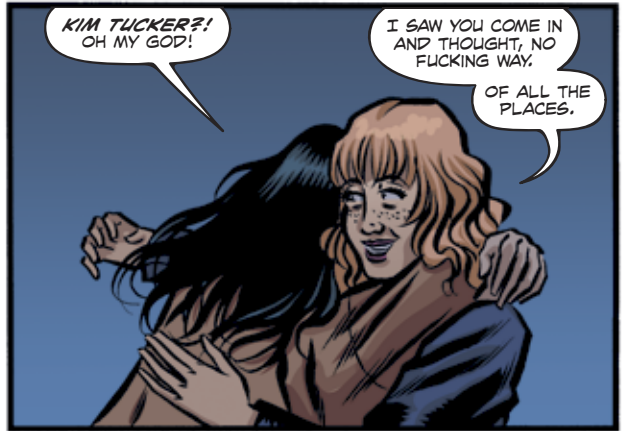
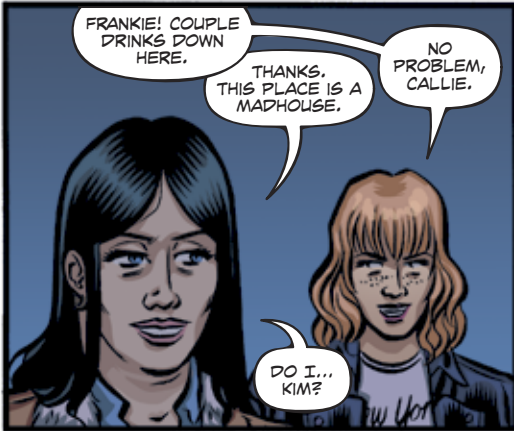
YOU GONNA SAY YOU'RE SORRY?

WHY DON'T YOU MAKE--

"THAT'S THE OTHER REASON I LIKE THIS PLACE.

"C'MON, JOHNSON. I GOT AN IDEA."



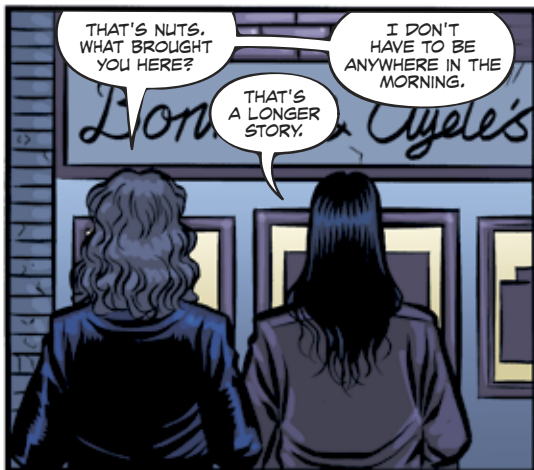




IS THAT
EVEN A REAL
THING?

I CAN
SHOW YOU
MY COOL
SCAR.

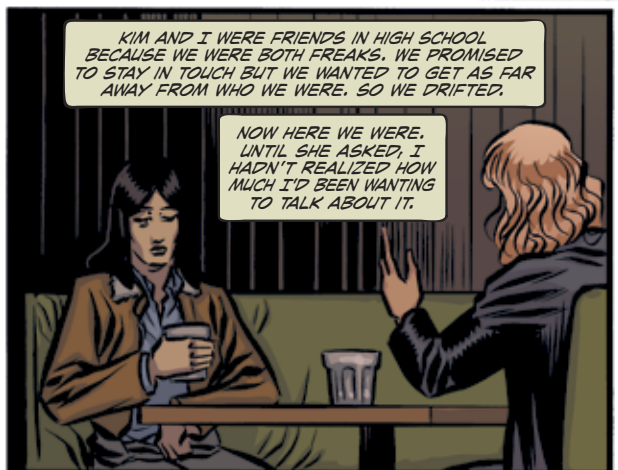
ONLY IF YOU
BUY ME A DRINK.
I KNOW A PLACE
THAT'S DEAD.



THAT'S NUTS.
WHAT BROUGHT
YOU HERE?

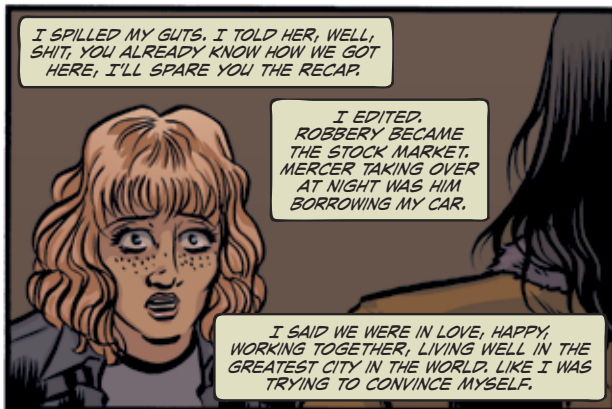
I DON'T
HAVE TO BE
ANYWHERE IN THE
MORNING.

THAT'S
A LONGER
STORY.



KIM AND I WERE FRIENDS IN HIGH SCHOOL
BECAUSE WE WERE BOTH FREAKS. WE PROMISED
TO STAY IN TOUCH BUT WE WANTED TO GET AS FAR
AWAY FROM WHO WE WERE. SO WE DRIFTED.

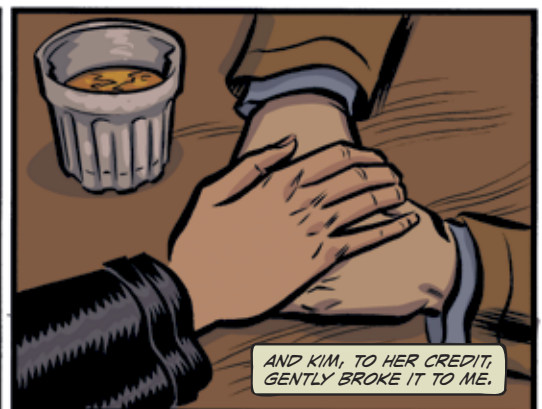
NOW HERE WE WERE.
UNTIL SHE ASKED, I
HADN'T REALIZED HOW
MUCH I'D BEEN WANTING
TO TALK ABOUT IT.



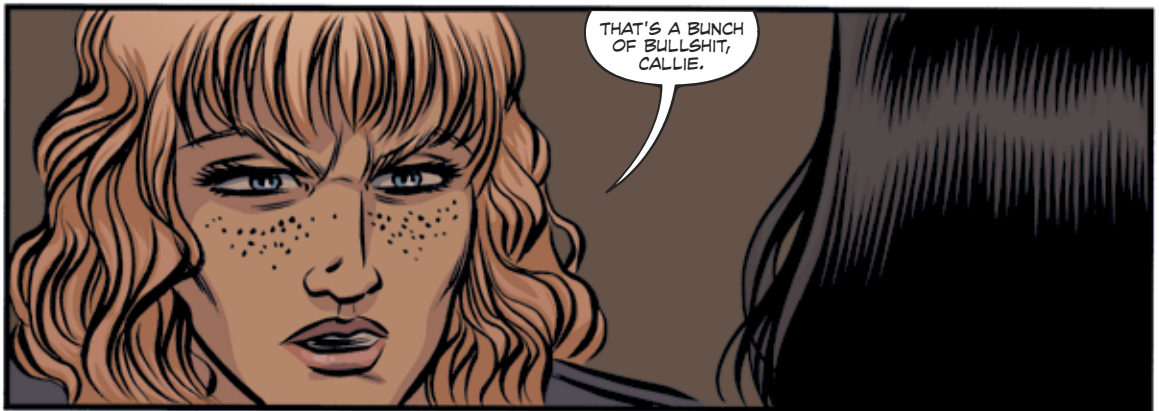
I SPILLED MY GUTS. I TOLD HER, WELL,
SHIT, YOU ALREADY KNOW HOW WE GOT
HERE, I'LL SPARE YOU THE RECAP.

I EDITED.
ROBBERY BECAME
THE STOCK MARKET.
MERCER TAKING OVER
AT NIGHT WAS HIM
BORROWING MY CAR.

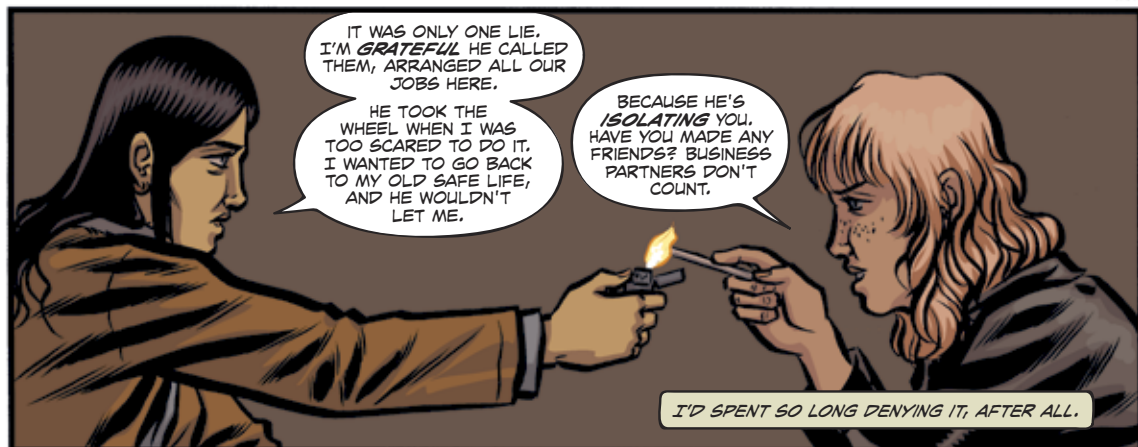
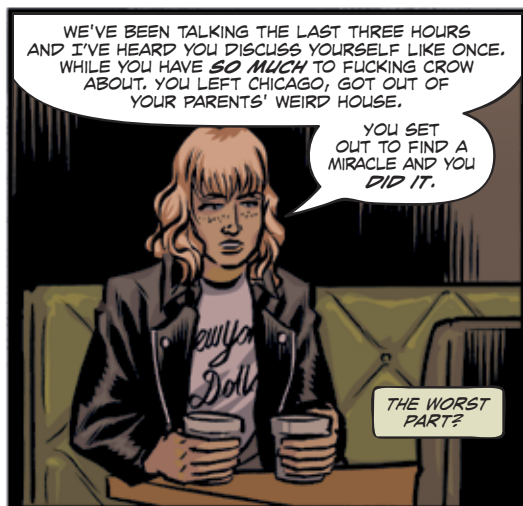
I SAID WE WERE IN LOVE, HAPPY,
WORKING TOGETHER, LIVING WELL IN THE
GREATEST CITY IN THE WORLD. LIKE I WAS
TRYING TO CONVINCE MYSELF.

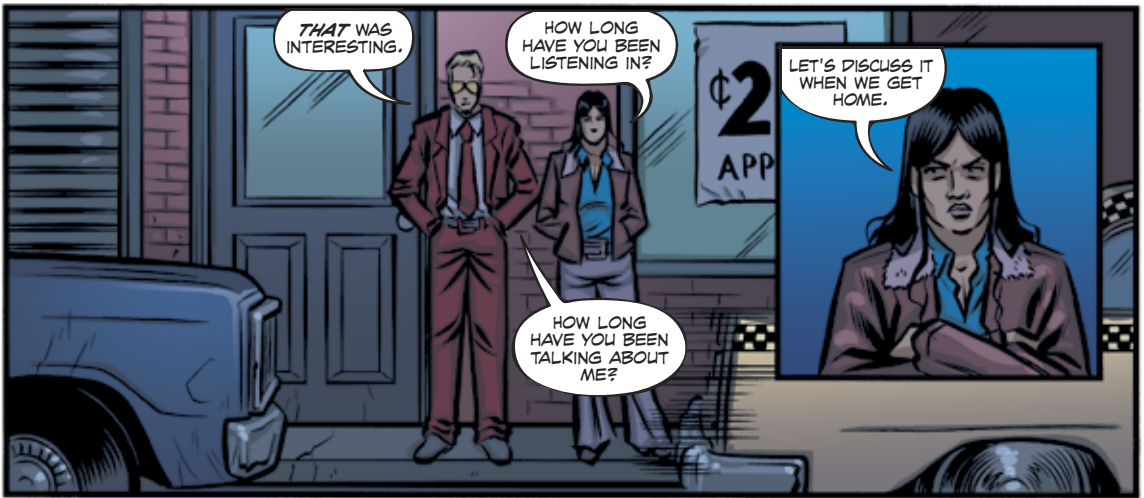


AND KIM, TO HER CREDIT,
GENTLY BROKE IT TO ME.



THAT'S A BUNCH
OF BULLSHIT,
CALLIE.





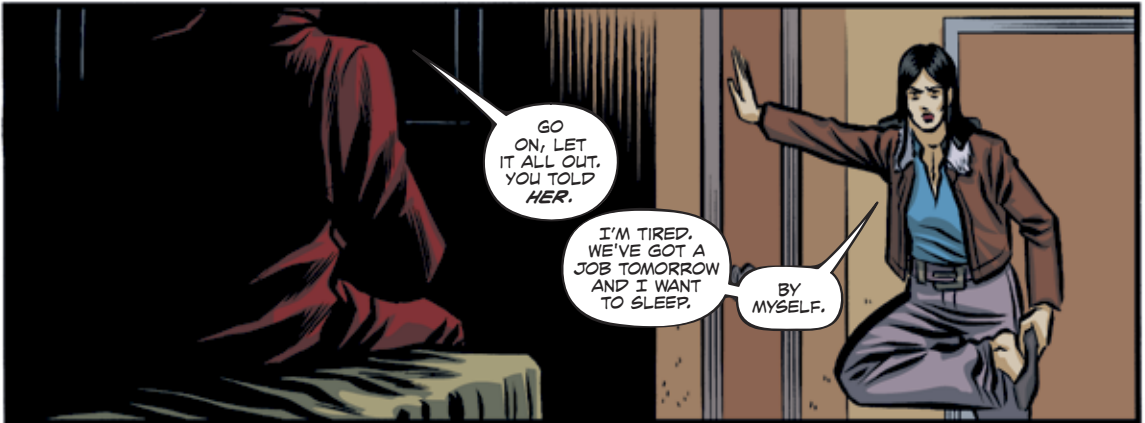


OF COURSE I DO, BABY.

I CAN ALWAYS TELL WHEN YOU'RE BEING SLEAZY BY HOW MUCH YOU CALL ME BABY.



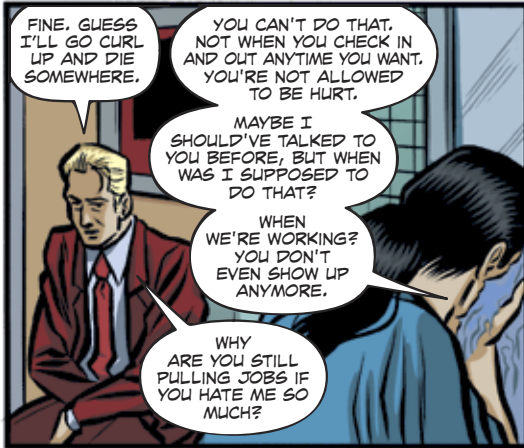
WELL I CAN'T WIN, CAN I?



GO ON, LET IT ALL OUT. YOU TOLD HER.

I'M TIRED, WE'VE GOT A JOB TOMORROW AND I WANT TO SLEEP.

BY MYSELF.



FINE. GUESS I'LL GO CURL UP AND DIE SOMEWHERE.

YOU CAN'T DO THAT. NOT WHEN YOU CHECK IN AND OUT ANYTIME YOU WANT. YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED TO BE HURT.

MAYBE I SHOULD'VE TALKED TO YOU BEFORE, BUT WHEN WAS I SUPPOSED TO DO THAT?

WHEN WE'RE WORKING? YOU DON'T EVEN SHOW UP ANYMORE.

WHY ARE YOU STILL PULLING JOBS IF YOU HATE ME SO MUCH?



BECAUSE I LIKE IT. I LIKE HOW IT MAKES ME FEEL.

STICKING IT TO ASSHOLES, ROBBING ROBBERS, GIVING MONEY TO SHELTERS AND CHARITIES.

THAT MAKES ME FEEL GOOD.



AND IT'S NICE TO BE GOOD AT WHAT YOU DO. TO BE WANTED. TO BE CHASED.

EVEN IF I HAVE TO SETTLE FOR COPS DOING IT.



OK, CALLIE. I'LL GET YOU WHAT YOU WANT.



MERCER'S GONE
WHEN I WAKE UP.

I USE THE MANTRA
SCOUT TAUGHT ME TO
KEEP HIM GONE, GET
MY HEAD STRAIGHT.
READY FOR WORK.



THESE GUYS? THEY DIDN'T
DO ANYTHING. NO MOB TIES,
NO ROBIN HOOD ANGLE HERE.

BUT IT'S A BANK,
SO THE ODDS THAT
THEY'VE SCREWED
SOMEONE OVER ARE
GOOD ENOUGH.



I DON'T EVEN CARE IF THEY DESERVE IT.

KIM WAS RIGHT ABOUT A LOT OF THINGS, BUT
MOSTLY THAT I NEED TO EMBRACE IT, THE THINGS
I'M GOOD AT, THE LIFE I'VE BUILT FOR MYSELF.

ME. NOT ANYONE ELSE.



WE'LL GET OVER THIS
THING, PROBABLY.

I MEAN, WE HAVE TO,
WE'RE STUCK TOGETHER.

I TRY NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT.
I HUM "THE CHAIN" TO MYSELF.
IT'S STILL MY SONG.



EVERYTHING
DRIFTS AWAY
AND I FOCUS
ON HOW WELL
IT'S GOING.

WHERE'S OUR
BACKUP?

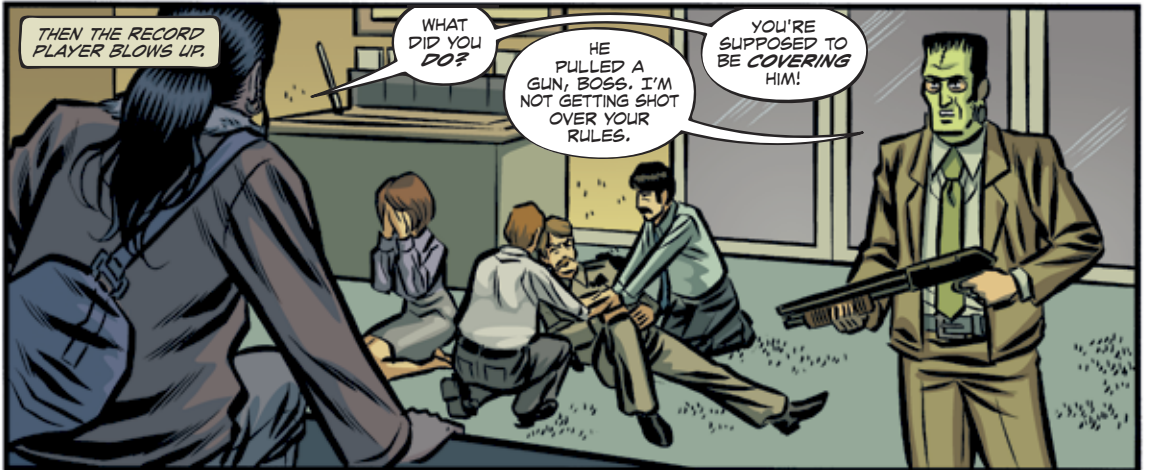
DON'T PUT TOO
MUCH STOCK IN
ANONYMOUS
CALLS.

LET'S
CHECK IT OUT
BEFORE WE GIVE
HEIDER A REASON TO
CRAWL UP MY ASS
AGAIN.

HOW UNTOUCHABLE I AM.



THEN IT'S LIKE A NEEDLE DRAGS ACROSS THE RECORD.



THEN THE RECORD PLAYER BLOWS UP.

WHAT DID YOU DO?

HE PULLED A GUN, BOSS. I'M NOT GETTING SHOT OVER YOUR RULES.

YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE COVERING HIM!



GEE, I'M SORRY. I GOT DISTRACTED BY YOUR FRIENDS.

MISS BOUDREAU? CAN WE TALK?

10-90 IN PROGRESS. MAN DOWN. WE NEED BACKUP.

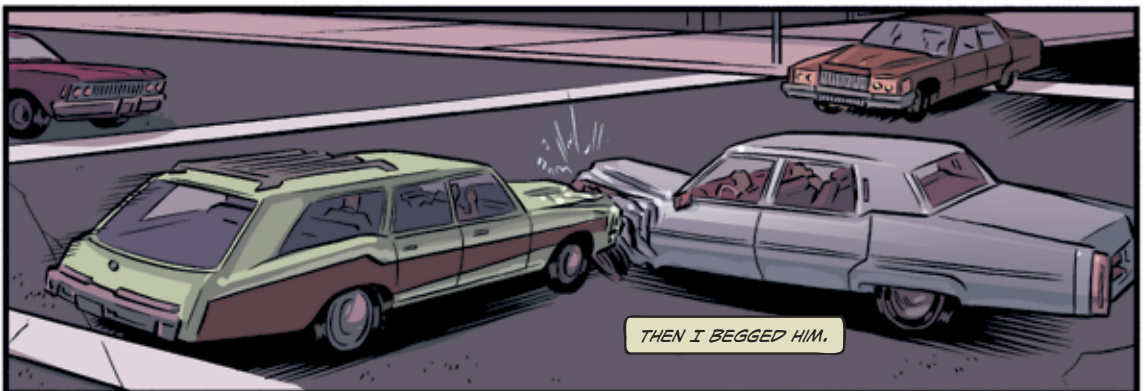
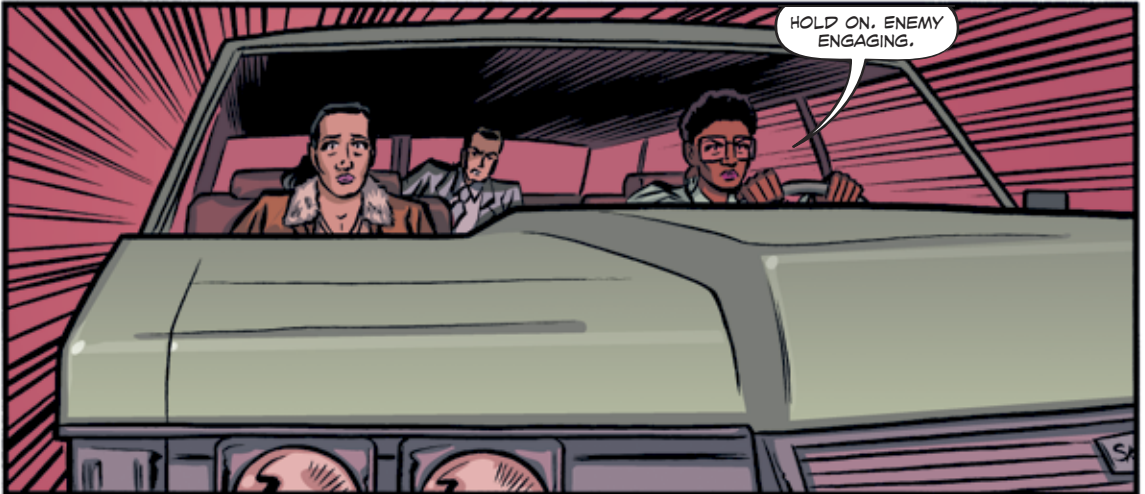
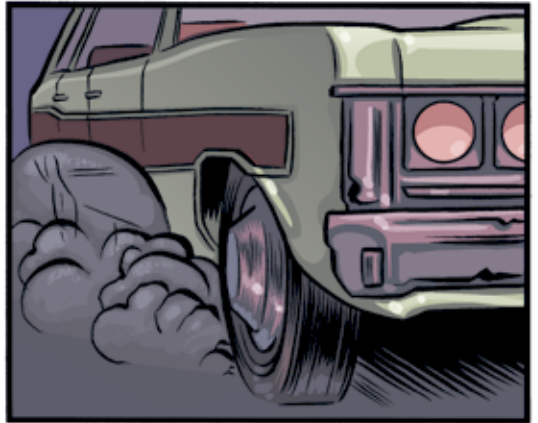
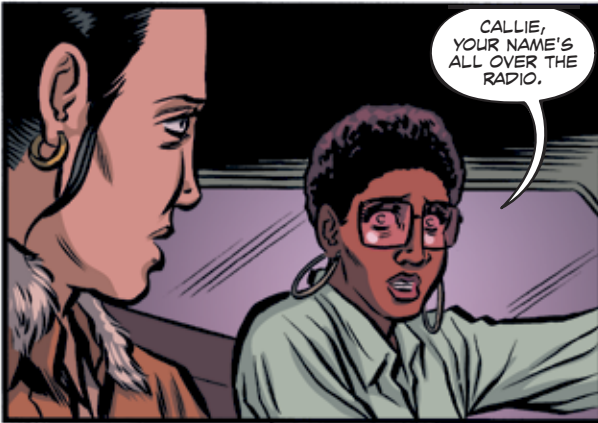
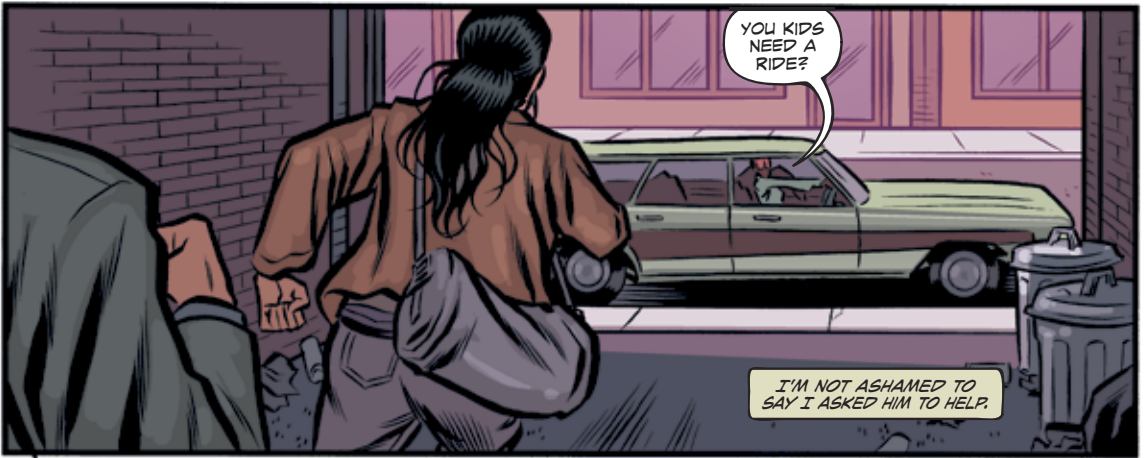


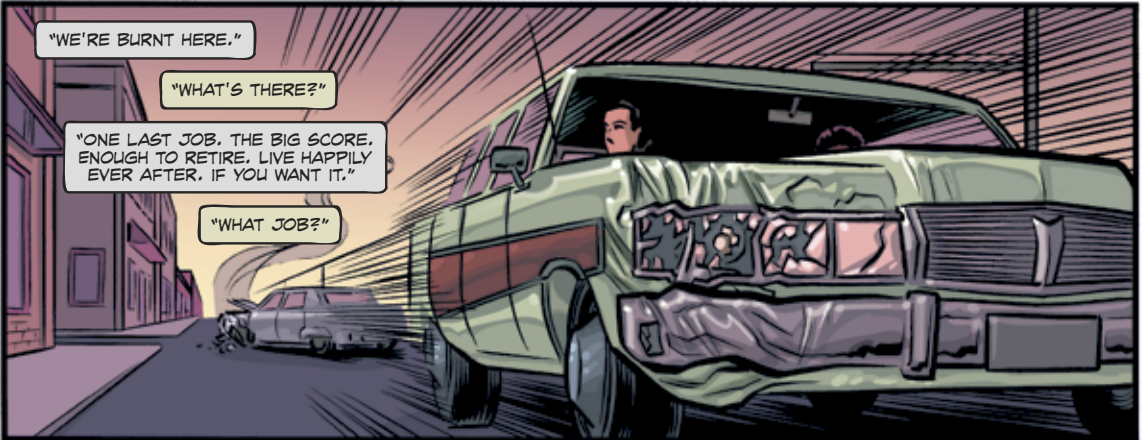
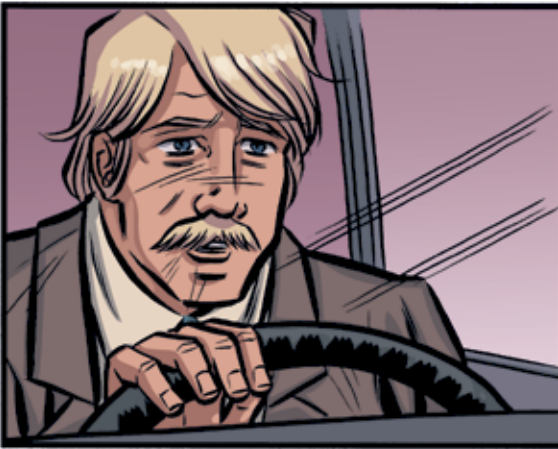
WE GOTTA GO.

NO SHIT. GOT A PLAN FOR THIS TOO?



HOW DOES PANICKING SOUND TO YOU?







CHAPTER 5







SO I'M DYING. AND THAT'S A BUMMER.

CALLIE,
PLEASE GET
UP.



YOU
CAN'T
LEAVE
YET.

FIVE YEARS, THAT'S
ALL I'VE GOT.

I SHOULD'VE
KNOWN BETTER.

I'LL
SAVE
YOU.



THEY ALL LIE.

EVERYONE SAYS WHAT THEY
THINK I WANT TO HEAR.

I KEEP ON BELIEVING THEM.
BECAUSE DEEP DOWN?
I WANT SOMEONE TO
RESCUE ME.



NO...

EXCEPT NO ONE
IS GOING TO.

NO ONE BUT ME.

NO!



YOU MUST BE OUT OF YOUR GODDAMNED MIND, CALLIE.

YOU'RE ONLY NOTICING NOW?

WHICH ONE'S THE NORTH STAR?

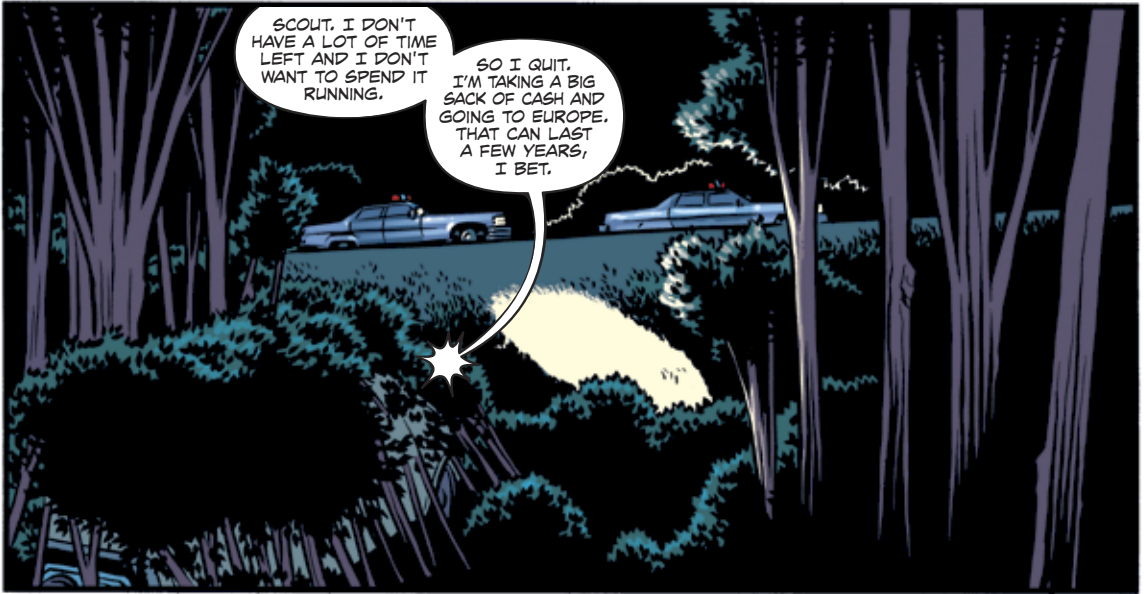


YOU'VE BEEN SO DAMN SMOOTH. EVEN WHEN A FEW OF OUR JOBS WENT SIDEWAYS, YOU DIDN'T BLINK.

NOW YOU'RE TALKING FANTASY LAND CONVICT TALK.

ONE LAST JOB?

RETIREMENT GIGGS?



SCOUT, I DON'T HAVE A LOT OF TIME LEFT AND I DON'T WANT TO SPEND IT RUNNING.

SO I QUIT. I'M TAKING A BIG SACK OF CASH AND GOING TO EUROPE. THAT CAN LAST A FEW YEARS, I BET.



WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THAT?

DID I EVER TELL YOU I GOT A HEART TRANSPLANT?

GET THE FUCK OUT OF HERE.

DOCTOR GAVE ME FIVE YEARS.

I'VE ALREADY USED UP A YEAR AND A HALF.



YOU EVER GONNA LEVEL WITH ME AT SOME POINT, CALLIE?

THAT'S WHAT I'M *DOING*. I'M TELLING YOU IT'S ALL OVER. AFTER WE DO THIS ONE THING.

OOH, IS THAT IT?

IN ALL ITS GLORY.

WHAT'S THE ONE THING?



AND THEN WE GET IN THE VAN HERE, DRIVE AWAY AND BY THE TIME THE COPS FIGURE IT OUT, WE'LL BE LIVING HAPPILY EVER AFTER.

THAT'S THE CRAZIEST SHIT I EVER HEARD.



I HAVEN'T EVEN TOLD YOU THE REST.

ABOUT MY SILENT PARTNER. HOW WE MET.

WHO HE REALLY IS.

I DON'T WANNA KNOW. HE'S SILENT, IT'S PROBABLY FOR A REASON.

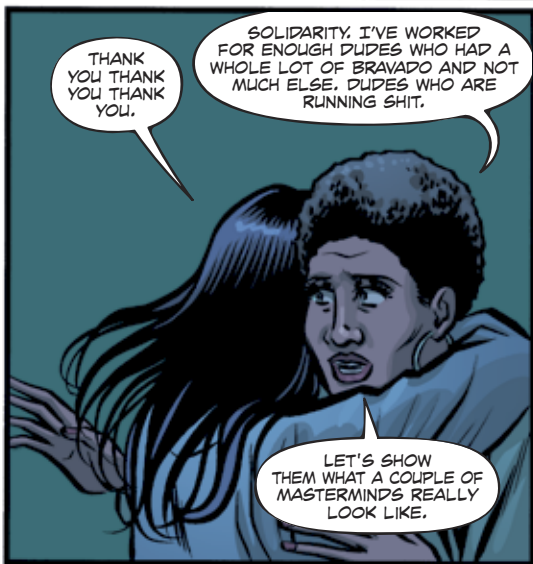
UNLESS HE'S PLANNING ON BAILING US OUT OF THIS MESS.



HE'S NOT. THIS IS ALL ON ME. BUT I NEED *YOUR* HELP ON THIS. I DON'T TRUST OTTO.

TOOK YOU LONG ENOUGH. I LIKE HIS WORK BUT THE GUY'S SHIFTY AS A RAT.

AND YOU'VE GOT MY HELP.



THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU.

SOLIDARITY. I'VE WORKED FOR ENOUGH DUDES WHO HAD A WHOLE LOT OF BRAVADO AND NOT MUCH ELSE. DUDES WHO ARE RUNNING SHIT.

LET'S SHOW THEM WHAT A COUPLE OF MASTERMINDS REALLY LOOK LIKE.



"BETTER GET SOME SLEEP, WE HIT THE ROAD IN A COUPLE HOURS AND I NEED A LOOKOUT."

"I'LL BE RIGHT THERE..."



"...I HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF SOME BUSINESS FIRST."

THOUGHT SHE'D NEVER LEAVE.

YOU KNOW YOU CAN JUST TALK TO ME IN MY HEAD, RIGHT?



I DON'T WANT TO GET YOU CONFUSED, OR COMPETE FOR YOUR ATTENTION.

GOOD.

WELL, I'M ALL YOURS NOW.



YOU SCARED?

NO, I'M FREAKING OUT. BUT I'M MANAGING.

YOU'RE GONNA BE OKAY. WE'RE GONNA BE OKAY. I'M WITH YOU ALL THE WAY.



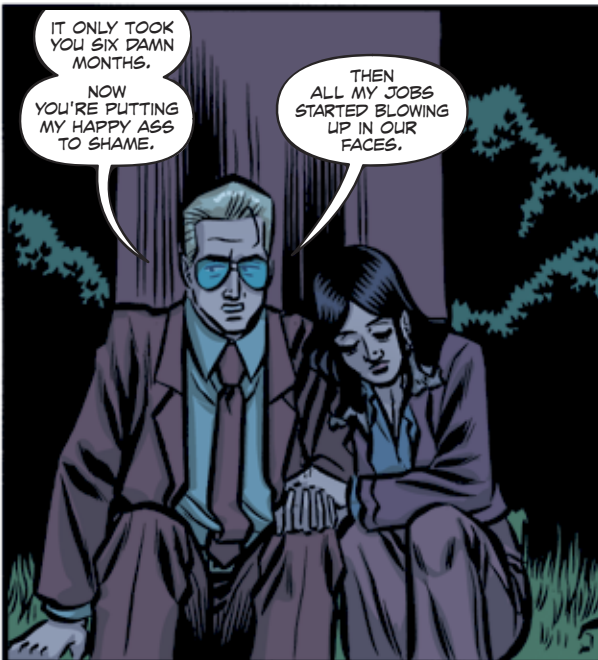
YOU WEREN'T BEFORE. BACK IN NEW YORK. YOU FUCKING TOOK OFF.

DRIVING MY BODY AROUND ALL NIGHT AND VANISHING ALL DAY.

YOU ABANDONED ME.

US.

I WAS... I WAS JEALOUS. YOU KNOW HOW LONG IT TOOK ME TO GET GOOD AT THIS? YEARS.



IT ONLY TOOK YOU SIX DAMN MONTHS.

NOW YOU'RE PUTTING MY HAPPY ASS TO SHAME.

THEN ALL MY JOBS STARTED BLOWING UP IN OUR FACES.

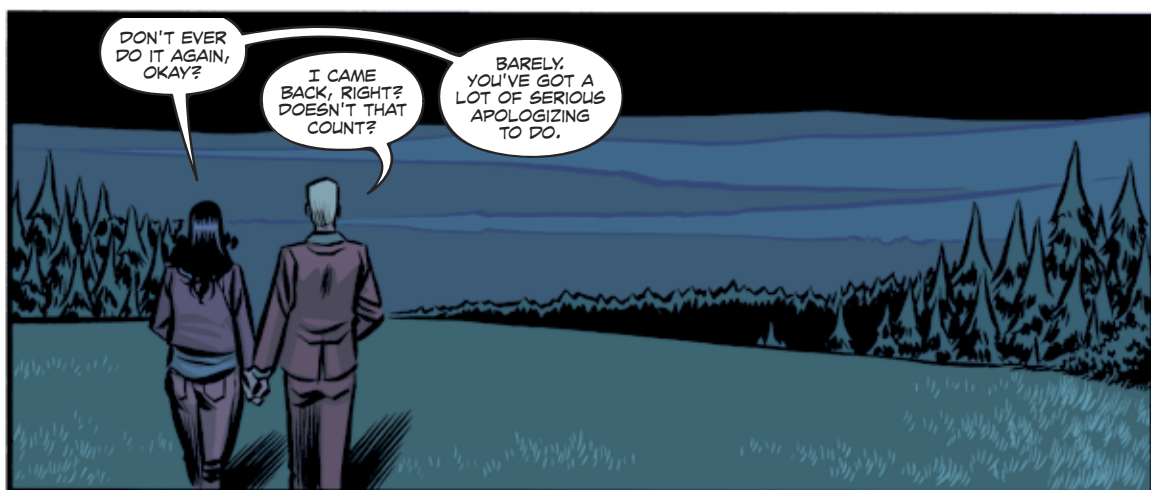


YOU DUMMY.

THIS ISN'T A COMPETITION.

I DO IT BECAUSE I LIKE IT. BECAUSE WE DO IT TOGETHER.

AND I LIKE THAT EVEN MORE.



DON'T EVER
DO IT AGAIN,
OKAY?

I CAME
BACK, RIGHT?
DOESN'T THAT
COUNT?

BARELY.
YOU'VE GOT A
LOT OF SERIOUS
APOLOGIZING
TO DO.



NO TIME
LIKE THE PRESENT.
UNLESS YOU WANT
TO WAIT?

SHUT UP
AND KEEP
KISSING
ME.



I HADN'T TOUCHED ANYONE IN
WEEKS. BUT WITH US, IT WAS LIKE
WE HADN'T SKIPPED A BEAT.

WE FIT TOGETHER PERFECTLY.



HE WAS MY NORTH STAR.
I COULD FIGURE OUT
ANYTHING IF HE WAS THERE.

AND WHEN I SAY IT IN MY HEAD
LIKE THAT, THAT'S WHAT SCARES ME.
HOW READY I AM TO FORGIVE HIM,
TO NOT MAKE WAVES.



BUT THAT FEELING PASSES WITH
EACH LITTLE SHUDDER AND I KNOW
THAT HE'S MY ONE AND ONLY.

YOU FALL IN LOVE WITH A
CRIMINAL, THERE'S GOING TO
BE SOME ADJUSTMENTS.

IF WE CAN ROB NEW YORK
BLIND, WE CAN GET
THROUGH THIS TOO.

THE DEEPER IN I GET, I REALIZE
NO PART OF MY LIFE WAS WASTED.

ARCHWAY TAUGHT ME HOW OFFICE TYPES TALK
TO EACH OTHER. A FRUSTRATED SECRETARY
WILL GLADLY HAND OVER SECURE DOCUMENTS
AS A SUBTLE FUCK YOU TO HER BOSS.

LIKE A LIST OF WHICH BUILDINGS
ARE OFFICIALLY DESIGNATED BY
CITY GOVERNMENT AS ABANDONED,
AND WHICH OF THOSE STILL HAVE
UTILITIES HOOKED UP TO THEM.

I THINK
YOU SHOULD
DO THIS ONE
SOLO.

I ALREADY
AM, EINSTEIN.

THE
STADIUM JOB.
YOU'VE THOUGHT
ABOUT IT, RIGHT?
CALLING ALL THE
SHOTS?

I THOUGHT
WE WERE OVER
THIS.

WE ARE.
BABE, I DON'T
WANT TO STAND
IN YOUR WAY.

I'LL BE THERE IF YOU
NEED, BUT THIS ONE IS
YOURS. YOU'RE WHY
I CHOSE IT.

OK.
THEN YES.
I WANT TO
CALL THE
SHOTS.

AIN'T TOO
SHABBY. STILL GOT
FURNITURE LAYING
AROUND.

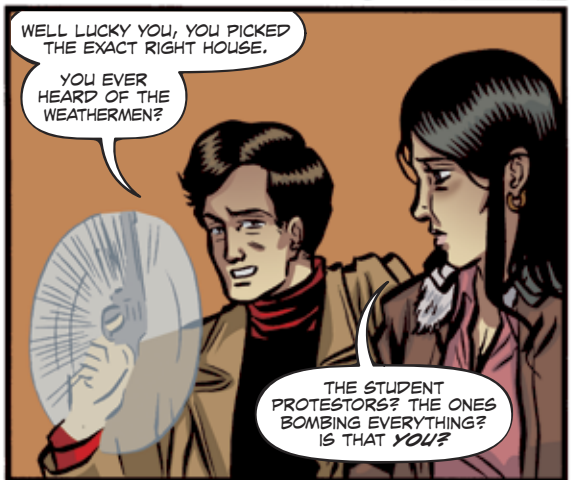
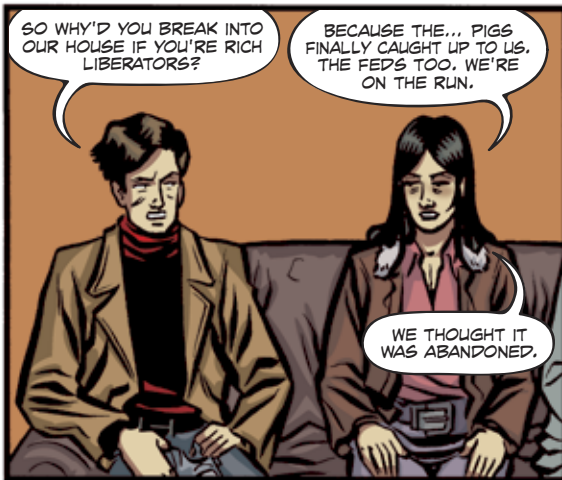
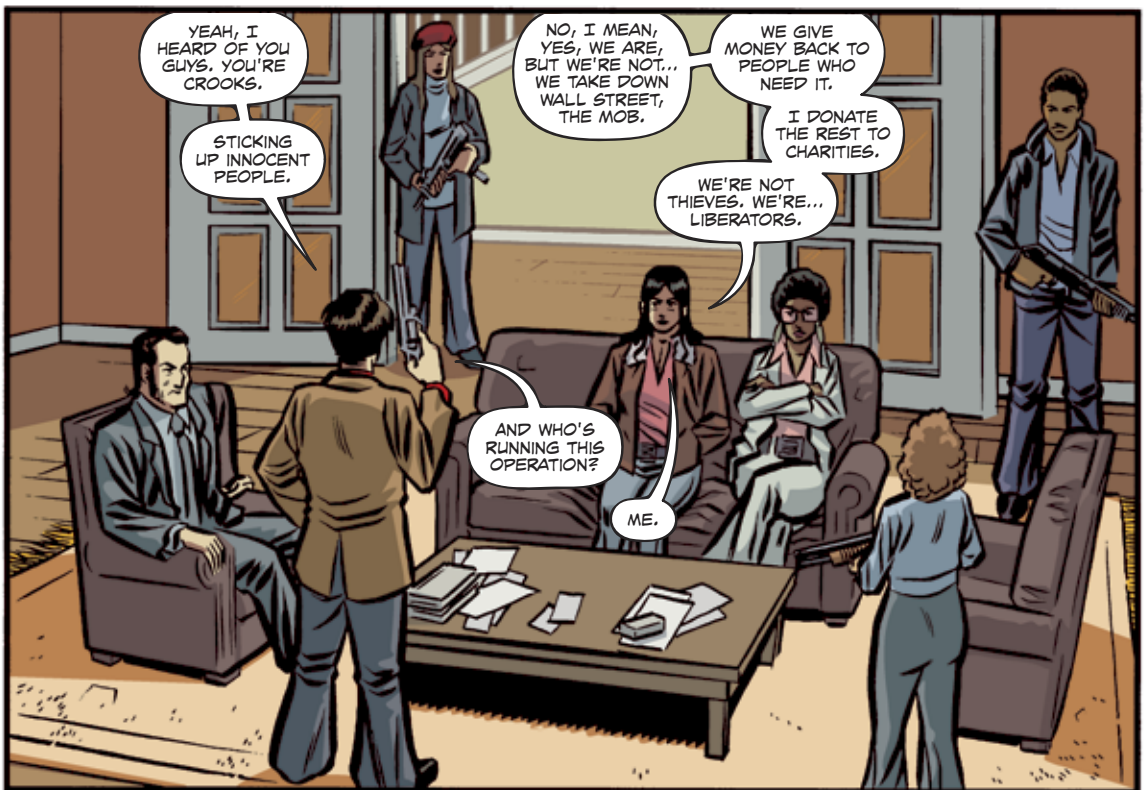
SMELLS
LIKE SOMEONE'S
STILL LIVING
HERE.

NOPE.
FREE AND CLEAR.
COPS SWEEPED IT LAST
MONTH AND NOT
A TRACE.

Y'EVER THINK THE
COPS COULD BE
WRONG?

YOU THE
PIGS?

HA.
FAR FROM
IT.



MURPHY MADE THE CALL, HE WAS THE LEADER, EVEN THOUGH HE SWORE UP AND DOWN THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE IN BOURGEOIS THINGS LIKE TITLES.

BERNADINE WAS THE EYES, EARS AND FISTS. SHE'D GONE UNDERGROUND AFTER RAIDING A RURAL FBI OFFICE. A GENIUS IN EVADING COPS.

BILL COOKED, MOSTLY. DUMPSTER-DIVED VEGGIES AND GRUEL. SOMETIMES HE BROUGHT HOME MEAT BUT WE NEVER ASKED WHERE FROM AND HE NEVER SAID.

NAOMI SMILED BUT DIDN'T SAY MUCH. MURPHY SAID SHE PUT THEM ALL TO SHAME. A REVOLUTIONARY BEFORE IT WAS COOL.

OTTO WAS AN ASSHOLE. WHEN I WASN'T PLANNING THE JOB, I WAS FIGURING OUT HOW TO GET RID OF HIM.

SCOUT WAS ITCHY, BUT SHE PLAYED ALONG.

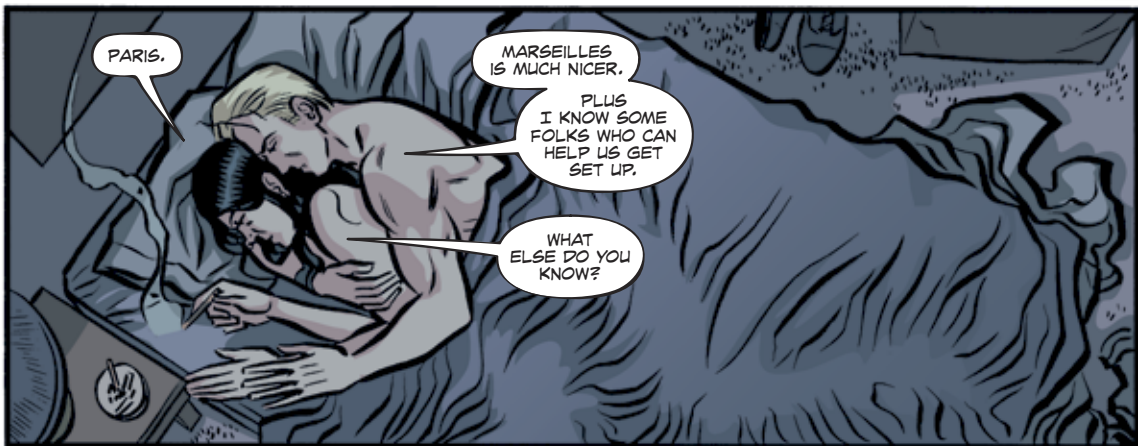
THAT WAS US. ONE BIG HAPPY FAMILY.

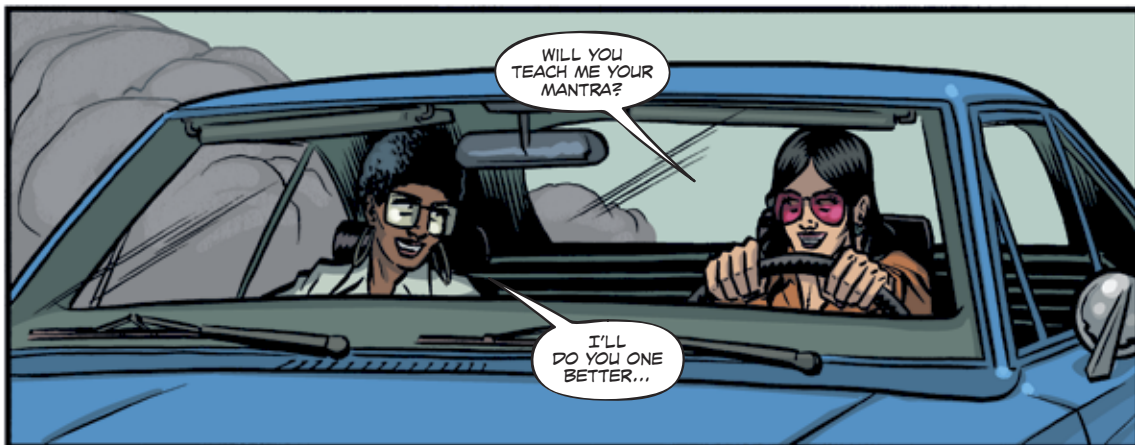
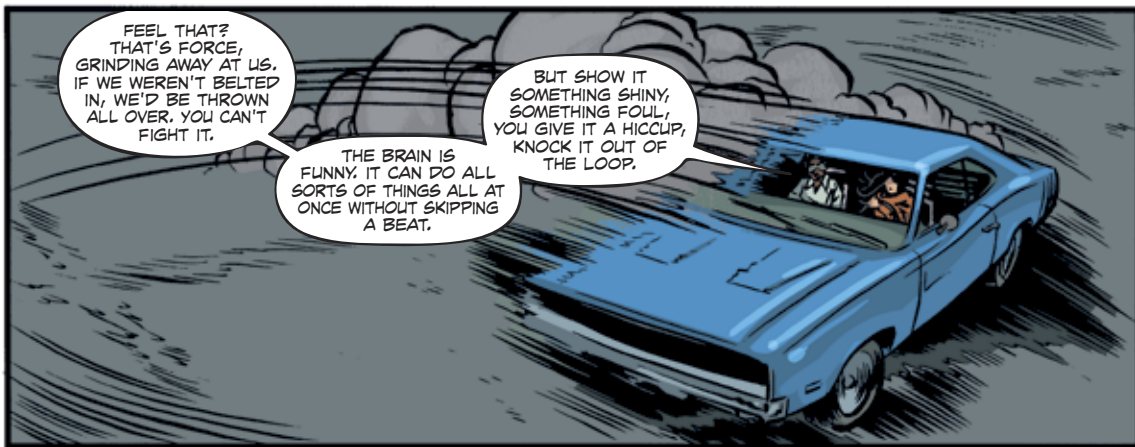
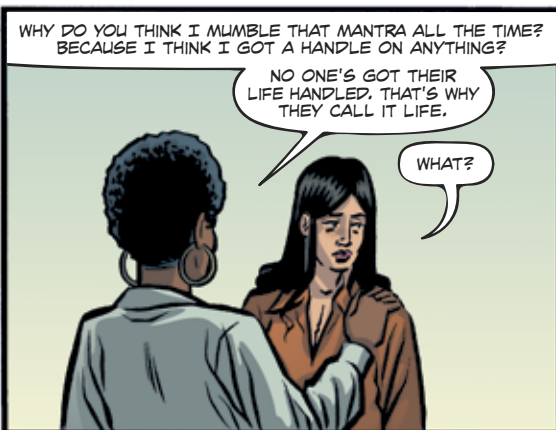
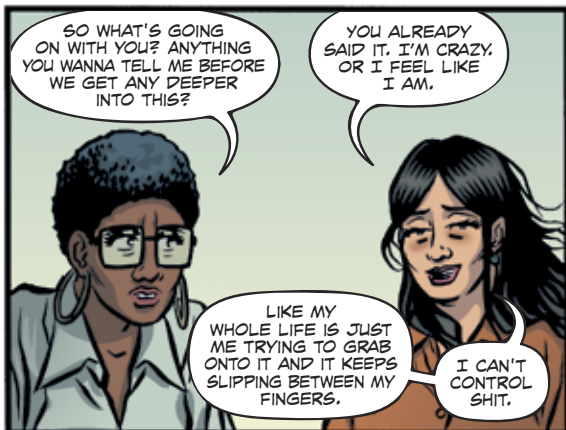
THE BRIGADERS HAD SMASHED THROUGH THE WALL TO THE ROWHOUSE NEXT DOOR AND LET US EACH HAVE A ROOM TO OURSELVES.

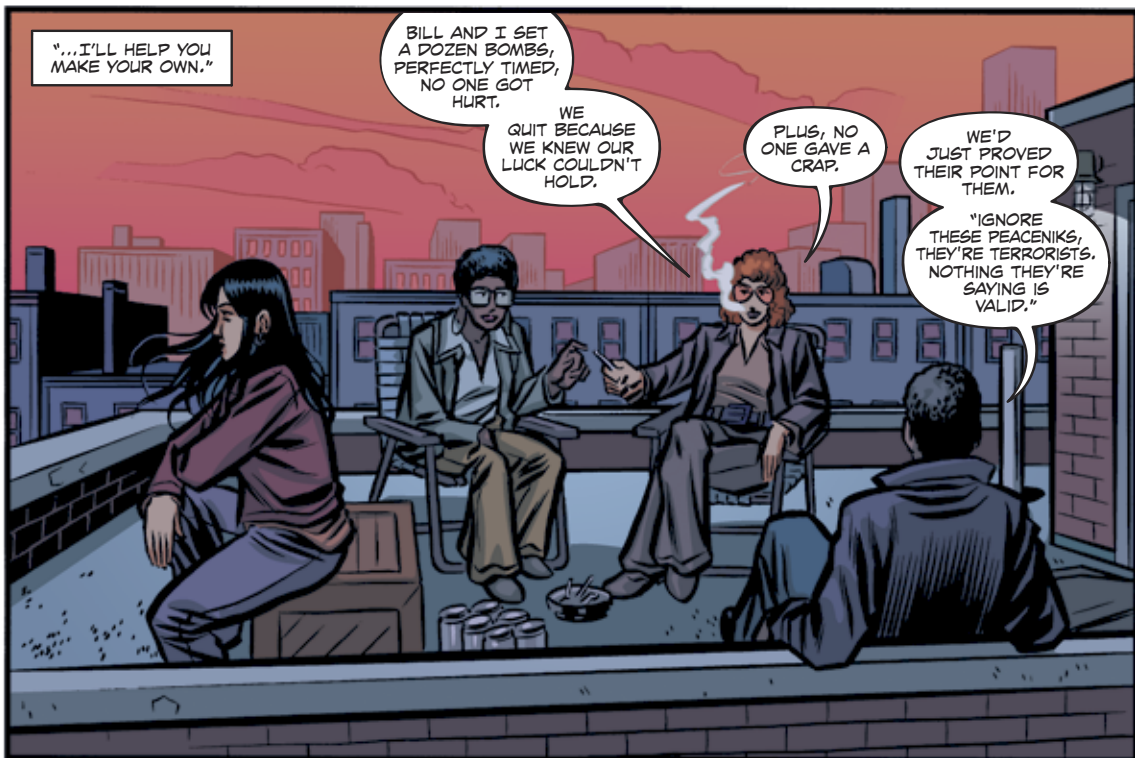
IT WASN'T MUCH, BUT I DIDN'T NEED MUCH.

JUST A FEW DAYS ALONE. TO GET MY HEAD STRAIGHT.

TO GET US BACK TO WHERE WE SHOULD BE.







"...I'LL HELP YOU MAKE YOUR OWN."

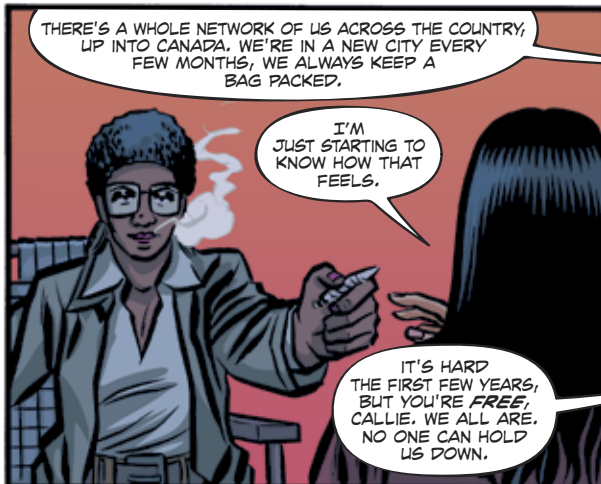
BILL AND I SET A DOZEN BOMBS, PERFECTLY TIMED, NO ONE GOT HURT.

WE QUIT BECAUSE WE KNEW OUR LUCK COULDN'T HOLD.

PLUS, NO ONE GAVE A CRAP.

WE'D JUST PROVED THEIR POINT FOR THEM.

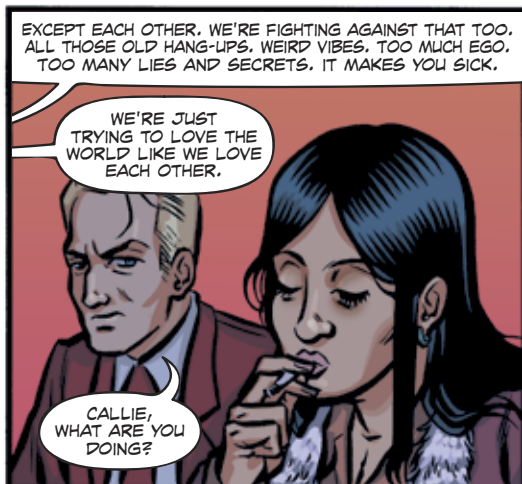
"IGNORE THESE PEACENIKS, THEY'RE TERRORISTS. NOTHING THEY'RE SAYING IS VALID."



THERE'S A WHOLE NETWORK OF US ACROSS THE COUNTRY, UP INTO CANADA. WE'RE IN A NEW CITY EVERY FEW MONTHS, WE ALWAYS KEEP A BAG PACKED.

I'M JUST STARTING TO KNOW HOW THAT FEELS.

IT'S HARD THE FIRST FEW YEARS, BUT YOU'RE **FREE**, CALLIE. WE ALL ARE. NO ONE CAN HOLD US DOWN.



EXCEPT EACH OTHER. WE'RE FIGHTING AGAINST THAT TOO. ALL THOSE OLD HANG-UPS, WEIRD VIBES, TOO MUCH EGO. TOO MANY LIES AND SECRETS. IT MAKES YOU SICK.

WE'RE JUST TRYING TO LOVE THE WORLD LIKE WE LOVE EACH OTHER.

CALLIE, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

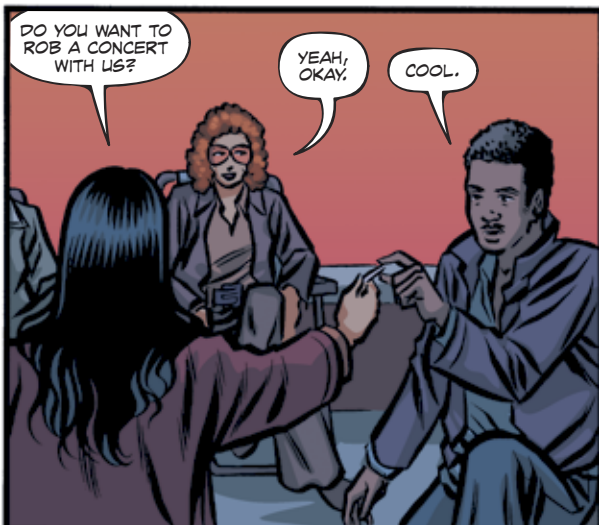


BUT FIRST YOU GOTTA LOVE YOURSELF, RIGHT?

EXACTLY. THAT'S THE HARDEST FIGHT OF ALL.

WOW, YOU'RE RIGHT.

DO YOU--



DO YOU WANT TO ROB A CONCERT WITH US?

YEAH, OKAY.

COOL.

"THERE'S FOUR BANDS ON THE BILL. TWO OPENERS, TWO MAIN ACTS. SO WE'LL GET THERE EARLY.

"OTTO, MURPHY, BILL, YOU'RE GOING IN AS ROADIES. WE CAN PICK UP CASES AT A PAWN SHOP. AND MASKS.

"BERNADINE AND ME, WE'RE THE GROUPIES.

"STOP LAUGHING, OTTO.

"SCOUT AND NAOMI ARE PARKED IN THE VAN OUTSIDE THE LOADING DOCK, LISTENING FOR POLICE TRAFFIC.

"NAOMI'LL USE THE PAY PHONES AND CALL THE ACCOUNTING OFFICE IF WE GET A HIT.

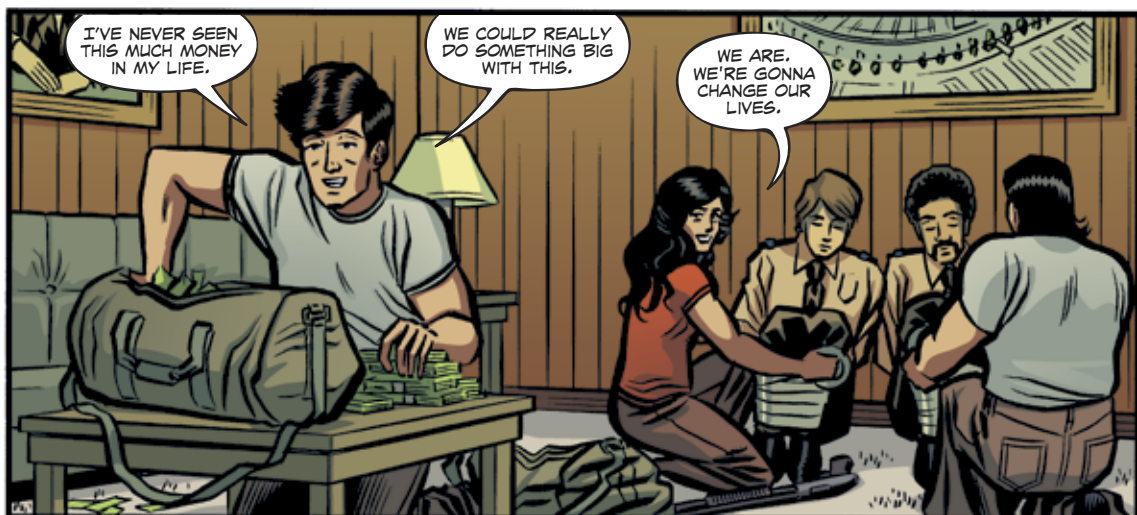
"ACT NATURAL."

"HOW HAIRY IS IT GONNA GET?"

"NOT AT ALL. WE DON'T LOAD THE WEAPONS. THEY'RE JUST FOR SHOW.

ACCOUNTING OFFICE

"THEY'RE NOT GONNA SEE US COMING."



I'VE NEVER SEEN THIS MUCH MONEY IN MY LIFE.

WE COULD REALLY DO SOMETHING BIG WITH THIS.

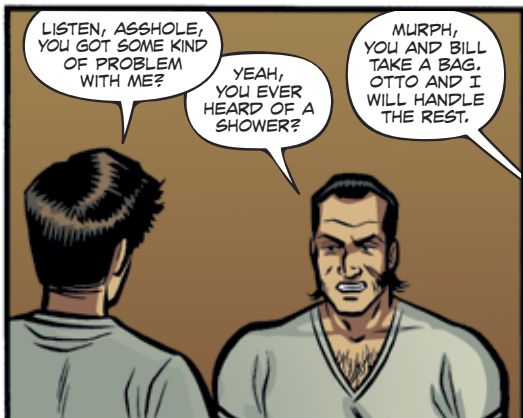
WE ARE. WE'RE GONNA CHANGE OUR LIVES.



NO, I MEAN, WE COULD CHANGE THE WORLD.

SHUT IT, HIPPIE. YOU WANNA WASTE YOUR CUT, THEN DO IT ON YOUR OWN TIME.

THIS AIN'T SOME KINDA COMMUNE.



LISTEN, ASSHOLE, YOU GOT SOME KIND OF PROBLEM WITH ME?

YEAH, YOU EVER HEARD OF A SHOWER?

MURPH, YOU AND BILL TAKE A BAG. OTTO AND I WILL HANDLE THE REST.



I'M GONNA TAKE MY END AND GO. THIS OPERATION'S GETTING TOO SCREWY.

BEEN NICE WORKING WITH YOU.



I HOPE IT WAS.

IT'LL BE THE LAST JOB YOU EVER DO.

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING, CALLIE?



TYING UP A LOOSE--

OH SHIT.



BRNNNG
BRNNNG

OH
SHIT.



NO.
NO NO
NO.

YOUR
LOOSE END COULD'VE
HELPED WITH THAT,
GENIUS.

OH
MY GOD,
SHUT
UP.



I *GET* IT, MERCER.
FINE. YOU'RE THE
BETTER THIEF.
I ADMIT IT.

NOW DO WHAT
YOU SAID YOU
WOULD.

YOU
HAVE TO DO
SOMETHING
FOR ME
FIRST.



AND COME
OUT WITH YOUR
HANDS UP.

NO.
I'VE DONE
EVERYTHING FOR
YOU. I FORGAVE
YOU. YOU MADE
ME A PROMISE,
MERCER.



MERCER?
WHERE
ARE YOU,
MERCER?





YOU'RE A REAL PIECE OF WORK, YOU KNOW THAT?

THAT'S FUNNY. COMING FROM A LIAR AND A USER AND AN ALL AROUND PIECE OF SHIT.



EARTH TO PSYCHO. I'M NOT EVEN REAL.

I'M A THING YOU MADE UP.

YOUR KNIGHT IN SOILED ARMOR.



YOU'RE REAL, MERCER. EVEN I DON'T HATE MYSELF THIS MUCH.

MAYBE I'VE BEEN AFRAID OF LIFE, BUT I'M NOT A COWARD LIKE YOU.



YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING. WITHOUT ME, YOU'RE LOST.

YOU CAN'T USE THAT ON ME.

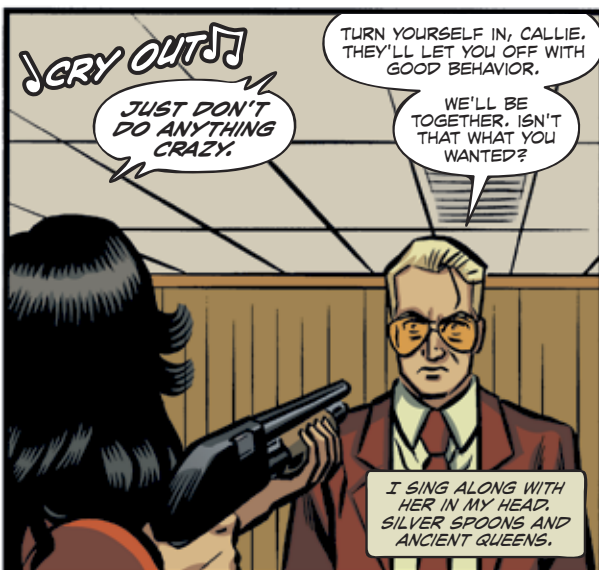


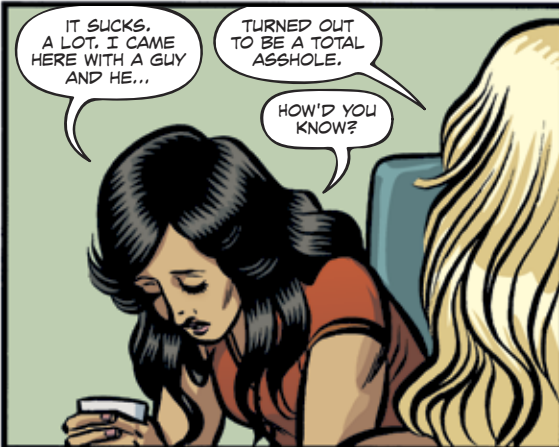
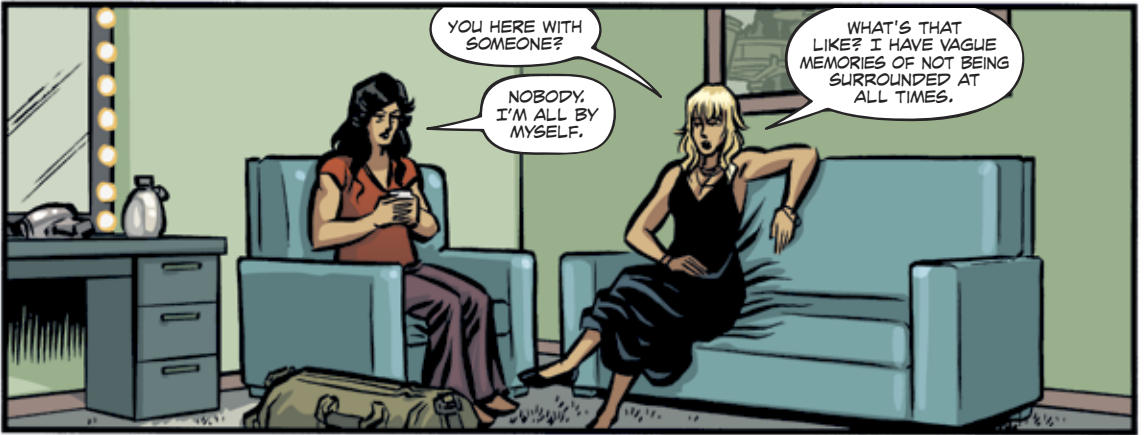
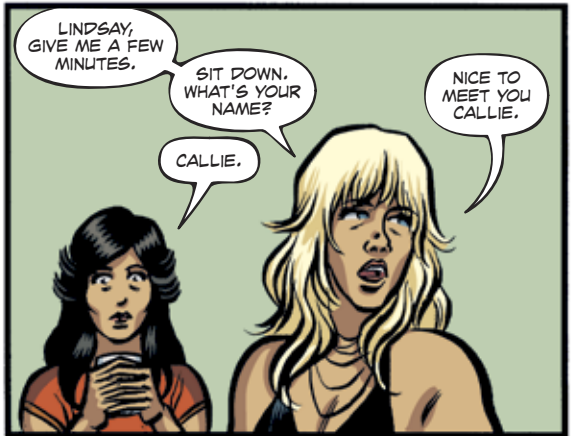
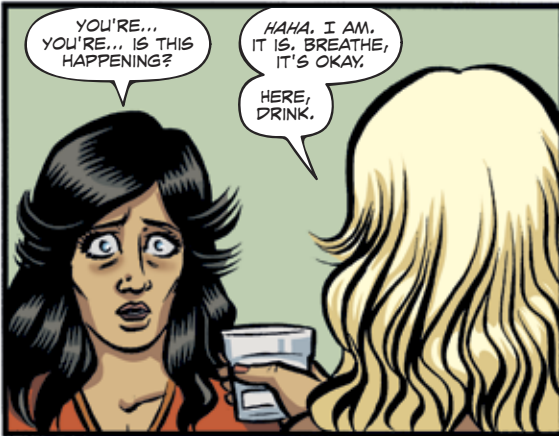
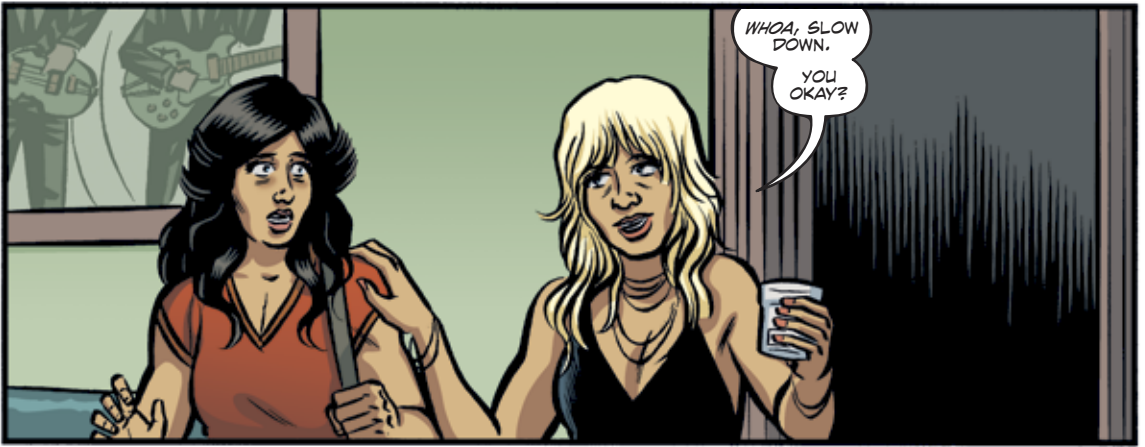
I KNOW. I'VE ALREADY GOT SOMETHING FOR YOU.

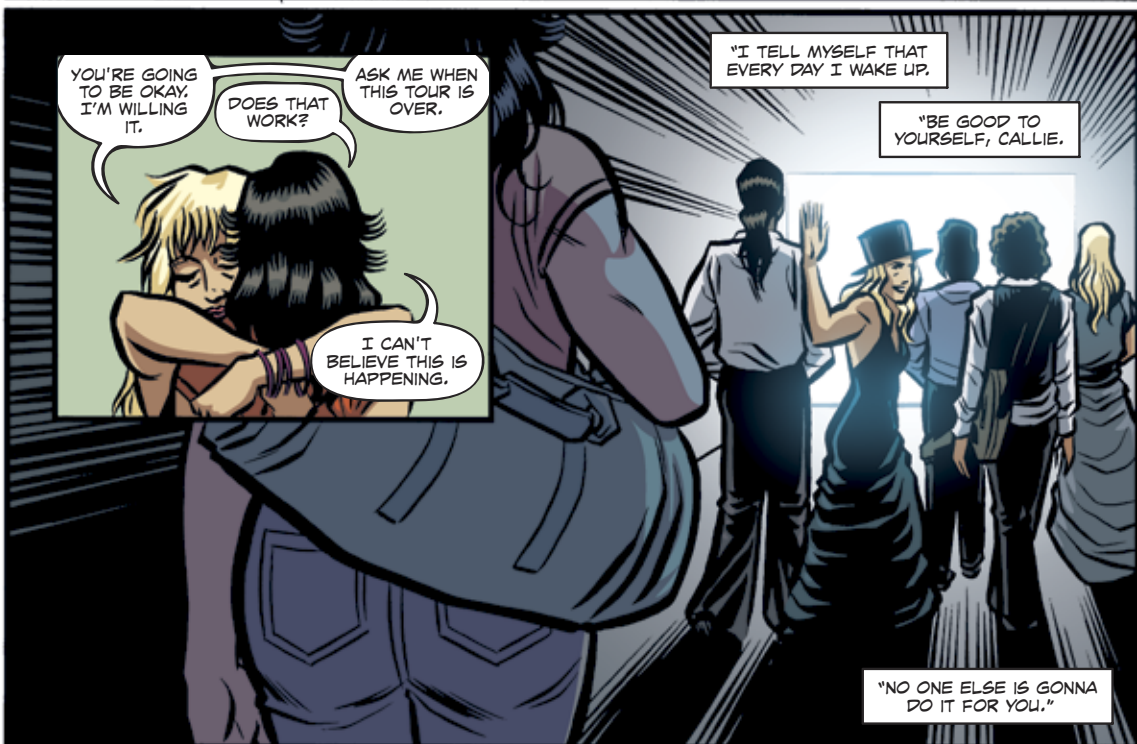
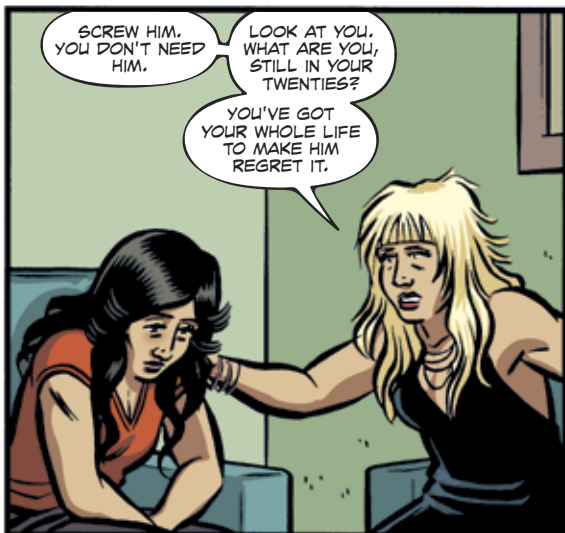
IT TOOK A BIT. TO FIGURE OUT MY MANTRA. TO DECIDE HOW TO BREAK THIS CHAIN BETWEEN US.

THE CHAIN. THE SONG THAT BROUGHT THEM TOGETHER. THAT BROUGHT ALL THIS TOGETHER.

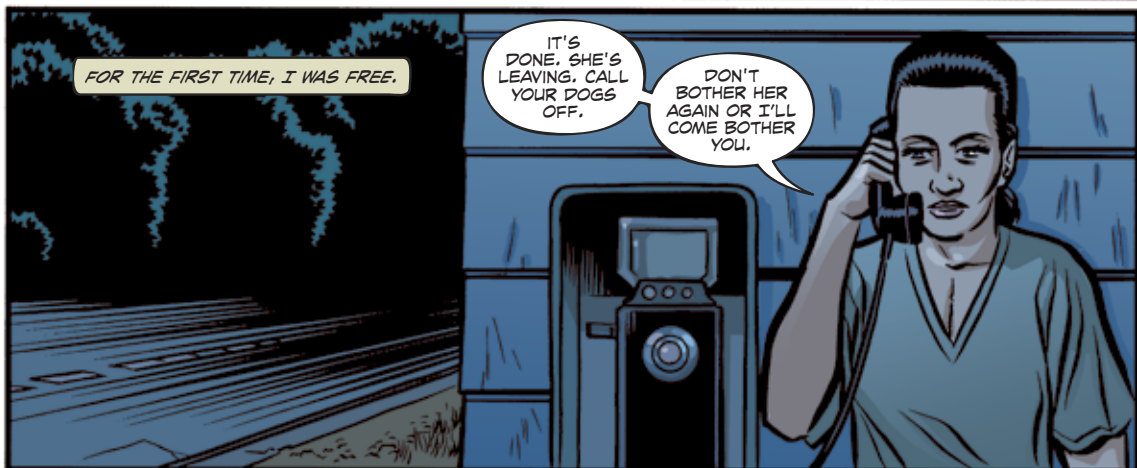
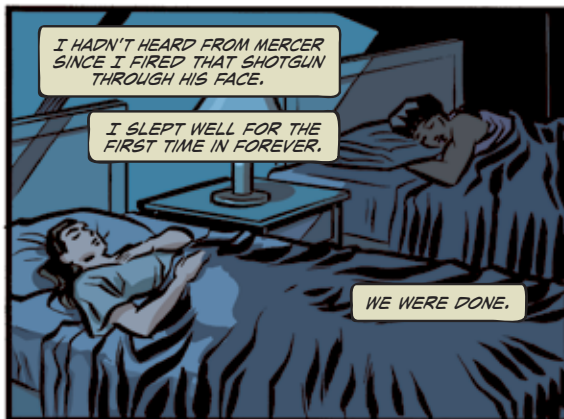
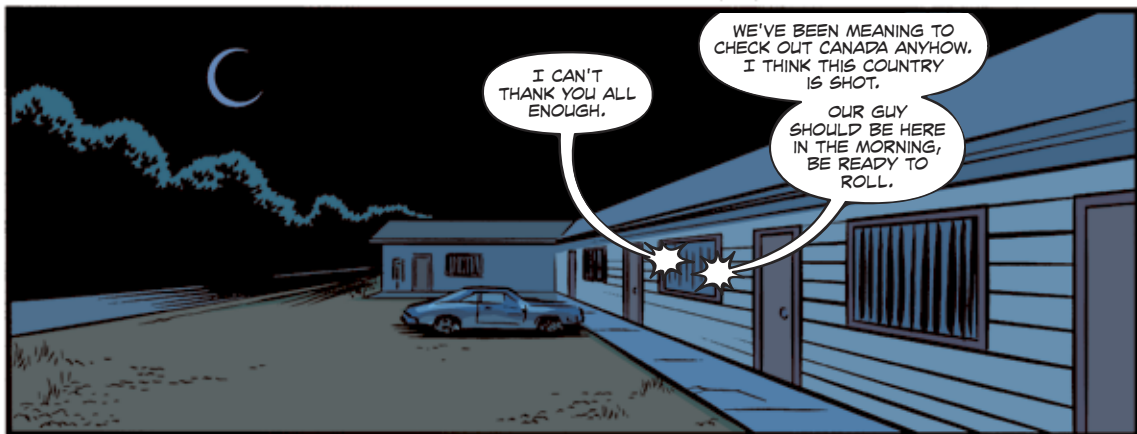
I NEEDED A SOLO NUMBER.



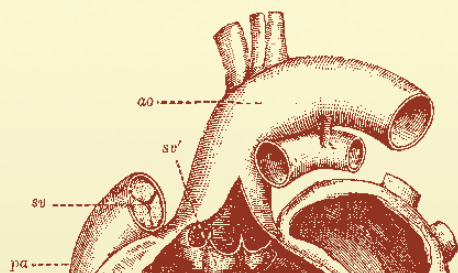




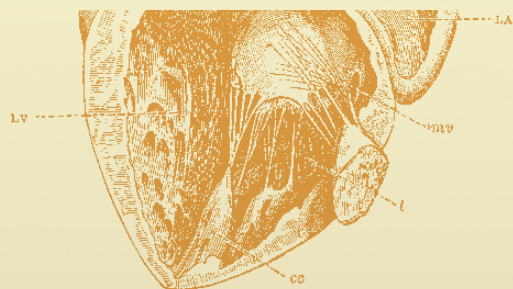








DAMN YOUR LOVE / DAMN YOUR LIES



NEART





TO BE CONTINUED

Callie barely escaped with her freedom after the Fleetwood Mac job and barely survived her bad breakup with Mercer, but now she has to rebuild her life while on the run from the FBI. With her heart acting weird and only a getaway driver for hire to lean on for support, Callie takes shelter in Canada, hoping the third time's a charm when it comes to creating a new life for herself. Navigating the waters of a broken heart and free medical coverage, Callie's attempts to go straight are no match for the healing powers of the rebound. With a new beau in her sights and the heart of a criminal thumping in her chest, Callie sets out to build her own crew and create a criminal empire she doesn't have to share with anyone.

But no matter how far she runs or how deeply she throws herself into her new life, Callie finds that maybe she and Mercer aren't quite through. In the battle between her head and her heart, despite all the ugly words and fist fights, Callie will discover that some breakups are never easy. Especially when your ex-boyfriend lives inside your head...

Follow the money and broken hearts left in the wake of Callie and Mercer's crime spree in the ongoing monthly series from Oni Press.

Available at cooler comic book shops everywhere.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

WRITTEN BY
CHRISTOPHER SEBELA

Christopher Sebela is a two-time Eisner-losing writer living in Portland, Oregon. He's written original works like **High Crimes**, **We(I)come Back** and **Dead Letters** as well as books like **Escape From New York** and **Captain Marvel**. When he gets a dog he's going to name it Tusk.

> christophersebela.com / @xtop

ILLUSTRATED BY
ROBERT WILSON IV

Robert Wilson IV is a comic artist and illustrator living in Dallas, TX. He is the artist and co-creator of **Knuckleheads** and **Like A Virus** as well as the artist for **Bitch Planet** #3. He is active in the poster community making tour and concert posters for bands such as The Mountain Goats, Ray LaMontagne, and The Sword. He already has a dog, though its name does not reference Fleetwood Mac.

> robertwilsoniv.com / @robertwilsoniv

COLORED BY
NICK FILARDI

Nick Filardi can be found coloring **Powers**, **Howling Commandos of S.H.I.E.L.D.**, **Slash & Burn**, **Helheim**, and the new series **Heartthrob** when he isn't tinkering with Magic: The Gathering decks. He resides with his 3-legged dog, in sunny Florida.

> nickfilardi.tumblr.com / @nickfil

DESIGNED BY
DYLAN TODD

Dylan Todd is a writer, art director and graphic designer. When he's not reading comics, making comics, writing about comics or designing stuff for comics, he can probably be found thinking about comics. He's the editor of the **2299** sci-fi comics anthology and, alongside Mathew Digges, is the co-creator of **The Creep Crew**, a comic about undead teen detectives.

> bigredrobot.net / @bigredrobot

LETTERED BY
CRANK!

Hi! I go by crank! You might know my work from several recent Oni books like **The Sixth Gun**, **Brides of Helheim**, **Terrible Lizard**, **Rick and Morty**, etc. Maybe you've seen my letters in **Revival**, **HACK/slash**, **Spread**, or **God Hates Astronauts** (Image). Perhaps you've read **Lady Killer**, **Ghost Fleet**, or **Sundowners** (Dark Horse). Heck, you might even be reading the award-winning **Battlepug** (battlepug.com) right now! If you're weird you could have heard me online at crankcast.net where I talk with Mike Norton, Tim Seeley, Sean Dove and Jenny Frison weekly about things that are sometimes comics-related. If you're super obscure you've heard me play music with the Vladimirs or Sono Morti (sonomorti.bandcamp.com). Probably you don't know who I am at all. That's OK.

> @ccrank

CALLIE WAS BORN WITH A BAD HEART.

After it sidelined her from life and a string of bad boyfriends stomped on what was left, she went looking for a miracle: a heart transplant. Now she's got a brand new heart, but she's stuck in her old life: crappy job, crappy boyfriend, crappy prospects.

Enter Mercer, a mystery man who gets Callie's heart beating like crazy. As her behavior changes and their flirting deepens, Mercer reveals he's her heart donor. Only Callie can see, speak to and touch him and he's in love with her, a love she feels just as strongly.

A master thief when he died, Mercer offers to teach Callie his criminal ways and how to turn them against her old job and kick off a nationwide crime spree. Hunted by the FBI and popping heart meds to stay alive, Callie will find out that nothing's as scary as two people in love with nothing to lose.

HEARTTHROB BOOK 1: NEVER GOING BACK AGAIN

collects issues 1-5 of the hit series by writer Christopher Sebela, artist Robert Wilson IV, and colorist Nick Filardi.

"Heartthrob is a crime romance with a lot of heart. See what I did there? No, seriously: it's great. And from three of today's top talents, you should expect no less."

—**Kelly Sue DeConnick**
Bitch Planet, Pretty Deadly

"Heartthrob is like a person you shouldn't fall in love with—it might seem wrong but it feels so right."

—**Sam Humphries**
Citizen Jack, Jonesy

"Heartthrob is smartly written, wryly drawn, and pitch-perfectly told. I'm hooked."

—**Chelsea Cain**
The New York Times *bestseller*
One Kick, Mockingbird

"Heartthrob is the deeply twisted, 100%-f**ked up, black-hearted, funny-as-hell, and strong as a motherf**ker love story that comics deserves. No one loves you like this, weirdo. DIG IT."

—**Matt Fraction**
Sex Criminals



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